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THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

By

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Submitted to the Department of Religious Studies,
Faculty of Arts, University of Glasgow in
fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Letters
(M. Litt.)

University of Glasgow
August 1979

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author should like to express his appreciation to Dr.A.A.KEE, the Head of the Department of Religious Studies, who served as the major advisor for this dissertation.

Acknowledgement is also due to Dr. G.E.W. SCOBIE, lecturer in the Department of Psychology, who generously gave advice to the author during the first year of this research.

The appreciation is also due to all friends who helped to complete this dissertation. Last, but not least, the author would thank his wife Normala, for the sacrifice she has made during the period of study for this degree.

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INTRODUCTION

Religious conversion has long been a subject of psychological interest. Various research studies have been done on it, concentrating mainly on the individual's attitude and experience in conversion. However, in this dissertation religious conversion will be approached in a rather different way from that of previous work. Although the present study will offer another perspective for examining conversion, it is not intended to deny the validity of the previous work. It is intended that this study will contribute a more comprehensive treatment of the subject.

The dissertation has been divided into two main parts. Part One consists of "The Social World and the States of Consciousness", and Part Two consists of the "Religious Conversion". Part One is designed to provide a model for the study of religious conversion but religion is not dealt with until Part Two. The study has been arranged in such a way so that the second

part reflects the method developed in Part One. Therefore, religion is deliberately omitted from Part One and becomes the central discussion of Part Two.

In Part One we deal with the social world in which the individual grows and develops. We indicate briefly how through socialization he comes to share the beliefs, attitudes, values and even world-view of his society. Religion is not mentioned at this stage and its place will be made clear in Part Two. However, the stability of this socially constructed world does not last for ever. Its instability can lead to a migration or transition to another world. It is this experience of crisis and migration which is to become the model in Part Two for our more comprehensive examination of religious conversion. The transition involves individual psychological factors, but these can only be understood when individual conversion is seen in its social context.

In Part Two the model of socialization and migration are applied to religion and religious conversion. Religion is **shown** to be part of the social world into which individuals are socialized. Most

religious people grow up within a religious tradition: conversion is not a normal religious experience. In Part Two we see that the actual experience of conversion comes from social and psychological factors which lead to breakdown and migration.

In Chapter Eight the foregoing analysis is applied to classical conversion experiences from the main world religions. In Chapter Nine we offer a series of criticisms of typical modern studies of conversion which are seen to be for its most part narrow and partial. Since the main discussion presupposes that religion is widely practised in any culture, we have also considered in Chapter Seven the counter case of socialization. This is dealt with as "de-conversion", i.e. conversion in the opposite direction. The comprehensiveness of the model used in this study is seen by the fact that it can as easily deal with de-conversion as with conversion.

Part One: THE SOCIAL WORLD AND STATES
OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Chapter One

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE SOCIAL WORLD

It is well to begin the study by exploring the interaction of individuals in the "social world".(1) How does the individual begin to discover the social world? What are his roles he should play in the social world? How does an individual come together with other individuals to share the same world-view and to maintain its reality? The process of the individuals's socialization is the main area of study in this chapter, although, it is not intended to discuss the socialization process itself in great detail. The roles of individuals in the formation of a social world will be our main concern in this chapter and we shall deal with the stability of individuals and their world-view within one social word.

(1) SOCIAL WORLD is used to mean the world where individuals live and form a society through their mutual interaction. It does not mean (in this dissertation) the natural world of the planet earth, as commonly understood.

Not many people consciously reflect on the social world in which they live. People normally participate in the social world activities, they work together, they learn together, they go to church together and they act together in the sphere of the same social world, without considering why they behave in such ways. Do they realize the necessity of interpersonal behaviour in the formation of a society? Do they realize that their everyday activities have produced a society or a social world for themselves?

What we mean by the social world is the world which is "constructed" ⁽²⁾ by human society, the world that is given to us by society. Man is able to construct the world through his interaction to other men: no man can live in total isolation from others. Man is a social animal. Since he cannot live apart from other fellow-men, there is no real man-world in its fullest sense, only the social world where he lives now, a social world which belongs to all men within that particular society.

(2) The word "constructed" does not refer to the religious term where the natural world is believed to be constructed or created by God. Our social world is constructed by individuals as a social product through the interaction of individuals in the society.

The nature of man is quite different from that of animals in the sense that man cannot live in isolation from other men. Unlike man, an animal enters the world with highly specialized and firmly directed drives. The animal is very much dependent upon its instinctual biological drives when it comes to the world. Argyle says,

" Social behaviour in lower animals is almost entirely instinctive: the entire pattern of social behaviour is innate and has emerged during evolution because of its biological survival value." (3)

As a result, it lives in a world that is more or less completely determined by its instinctual structure. This world is closed in terms of its possibilities, programmed as it were, by the animal's own constitution. Consequently, each animal lives in an environment that is specific to its particular species. A particular species of animal is very much restricted to a specific geographical distribution. Besides that, each animal world has its own special characteristics. It differs from one species to another. Therefore, we can find that animal-worlds are of various kinds according to their species. There is a mouse-world, a dog-world, a tiger-world, a horse-world and so forth.

(3) Michael Argyle, The Psychology of Interpersonal Behaviour, first published 1967, 2nd.edition, (London: Penguin Books, reprinted 1977), p.17.

By contrast to the nature of animals, man needs the process of socialization in order to complete his personality development. In other words, there is a biological foundation to the process of "becoming man" in the sense of developing personality. Because of this biological factor, the process of "finishing" man's development occurs from his birth to the adolescence. During this period, the fulfillment of his needs is completely dependent upon his parents. Gradually, he begins to learn how to walk, to speak, to put on his own dress and to play with other boys or girls in his peer groups. The process continues for many years until he knows how to perform an appropriate act as an individual in the social world. When he becomes an adolescence he understands the meaning, values and purposes of life in the world. Therefore, man is not born with special and direct species-specific character. His incomplete or unfinished character makes him dependent upon the learning process or specifically the process of socialization. As Luckman says,

" A human organism could not create meaning autonomously. To put it differently, it could not develop into an individual self." (4)

(4) Thomas Luckmann, The Invisible Religion, (New YORK: The Macmillan Company, 1967), p.46.

Without the learning process and full socialization man is unable to construct his own world-view. Therefore, personality development of an individual is not complete unless he has gone through the learning process because he is not born with a complete organism.

It has thus been found that man differs from animal in the sense that there is no man-world. Man's world is imperfectly programmed by his own constitution. It is an open world. That is, it is a world that must be fashioned by men's own activity. Man must make a world for himself. The world-building activity of man, therefore, is not a biologically extraneous phenomenon, but the direct consequence of man's biological constitution. Therefore, man is not able to live apart from other men because they have to interact in order to construct a social world. Thus, the process of socialization is essential in the world-building activity of man so that the same world-view can be constructed (when the social world is produced).

Every individual grows up within the environment of his own social world and its culture. No one grows up in isolation from other fellow-men. Therefore,

socialization is essential to complete an individual's personality development so that he can experience the same type of culture as other individuals in his social world. Therefore socialization is always understood as;

" the life-long process through which the human organism learns a culture, or possibly several cultures." (5)

Socialization as Davis says, is not simply the process of learning the specific skills of tool-using, language and social organization, but implies as well the learning of these cultural forms of behaviours as they are defined by a particular society. Individuals as we can see, spend a great deal of their time engaging in some kind of social interaction. They live together in one social world, work together, and spend spare time together with their friends. This interaction has the objective of acquiring the same type of culture or perhaps several cultures from other individuals in the same social world. The process of learning is therefore a mediator to the achievement of a complete socialization. A successful socialization produces individuals who have the same world-view. This is important in order to maintain the stability of the social world.

(5) Allison Davis, "Socialization and Adolescent Personality," READINGS IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, revised edition, (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1952), p.520.

It is well to divide the process of socialization of individual into two main stages, that is, primary and secondary socialization. It will provide a clear understanding of how an individual discovers the social world and how he comes to share the same world-view (the reality of the social world).

A child for example, is born, introduced to the existing social world and has to adjust himself to the existing world-view in the social world to which he belongs. He has to be socialized within his own social world so that his unfinished character and personality are socialized and completed. The behaviour of other individuals around him is a basic source in the development of his own behavioural patterns. He assimilates the way of life of the other individuals as the source of his world-view. An individual is born into a family and has therefore to interact with the other members. Any rejection by other individuals in his social world is a common source of distress to him. This interaction is essential, as Davis says,

" His family's economic, social, and sexual participation is largely limited to its own group. He is controlled by his social position, not simply in the formation of his early habits, but throughout his life. He is controlled by the pressure which he receives from groups above and below him to restrict his participation, that is, to 'keep him in his (social) place'." (6)

Above all, it can be said that humans have a 'herd instinct' or 'gregarious instinct' which draws them together. It is now realized that individuals seek a number of more specific goals in social situation - help with work or other activities, friendship, guidance, power, admiration and so forth.

The incomplete character of human personality makes it impossible to build a social world alone. The existing social world is given to the individual when he is born. He discovers that the social world is already in existence when he comes to inhabit it. It was produced by other individuals in his society before he is born. His existence in this social world is therefore to share its world-view and to share its maintenance through mutual interaction.

Primary socialization normally takes place at the early age of a child. His unfinished character

(6) Ibid., p.521.

needs a complete socialization so that he can grow up and acquire the world-view of his home-world and later his social world. Berger says,

" Primary socialization is the first socialization an individual undergoes in childhood, through which he becomes a member of a society." (7)

It is the most important process for a child because he is not born a member of a society. He has to undergo the process of socialization in order to become a member of a society. Thus, at the early age of a child, he begins to apprehend or to interpret the activity of individuals around him (particularly his parents or perhaps his family). When he comes to enter the social world, firstly he has to know more about his fellow-men and secondly, he has to apprehend the meaning and social reality (world-view) of the social world. These are the two functions that a child should fulfill when he enters the social world. Therefore, he needs the socialization process in order to achieve them.

It has been found that primary socialization involves more cognitive learning. It depends much upon

(7) Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, first published in the U.S.A. 1966, (Middlesex: Penguin Book Ltd., reprinted 1976), p.150.

the emotional attachment to other individuals (his parents for example) in order to undergo the learning process. A child for instance, he first begins to understand his parents' roles and attitudes and then tries to make them his own. Furthermore, he not only takes on the roles and attitudes of his parents but in the same process takes on their world.

Primary socialization also creates in the child's consciousness a progressive abstraction from the roles and attitudes of his parents to roles and attitudes of other individuals in the social world in general. For example, a child is told by his parents not to play with fire. When he discovers that other individuals (outside his family) are telling the same thing, he begins to generalize that advice or attitude from his parents to the individuals in general. It is the early process of primary socialization where a child begins to share a common world-view of the social world. His learning process, therefore begins at home with his family. He begins to construct a "home-world" within his own family.

Language is one of the most important instruments of socialization. Individuals can act upon each other in the social world through the medium of language as a means of communication. It is the medium in which the existing world-view of his parents can be transmitted to him and then to the next generation. This is an important means by which the world-view (the reality of the social world) is maintained. Culture and behaviour would also be transformed through the medium of language. Whether it is employed in the face to face communication, spoken, or indirectly, written, it always functions as an essential mediator in individual interaction.

The importance of language has been shown by Robert Serpell by saying that,

"Language is a very obvious candidate for emphasis as a mediator between culture and behaviour. Not only is language widely regarded as man's most distinctive behavioural characteristic within the animal kingdom, but it also a widely recognized distinguishing characteristic for different cultures." (8)

An individual's world-view, his culture, his behaviour,

(8) Robert Serpell, "Culture's Influence on Behaviour," ESSENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY, edited by Peter Herriot, (London: Methuen & Co.Ltd., 1976), p.55.

are all coded into the language to facilitate communication among individuals in a social world and to enable transmission of the world-view to the young so that they will share the same type of world-view. Language is capable of expressing the immediate experience of an individual so that other individuals can share his experience, and thus functions as the means of transmitting immediate experience (meaning) to others.

The role of language in the social world covers a wide range of social interaction. Not only the intrinsic meaning of human organism can be expressed, but also the social behaviour can be affected as well. (9) It always functions, as Kevin Wheldall says, to convey very discrete meanings and affect behaviour accordingly. It is the best means of maintaining the reality of the world-view. Through the medium of language, every individual can act upon every other and share a common way of understanding the world-view. It is through language says Berger that an en-

(9) Kevin Wheldall, "Social Behaviour," ESSENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY, edited by Peter Herriot, (London: Methuen & Co.Ltd., 1975), p.62.

tire world can be actualized at any moment. (10) Therefore, language plays an important role in the life of individuals in their social world. It is therefore, one of the most significant factors of primary socialization.

Knowledge is also another significant factor of socialization, and is largely acquired through language. Normally, the degree of knowledge differs from one individual to another. We cannot expect all individuals in one social world acquire the same type of knowledge and professional expertise. An individual for instance, he may share his professional knowledge with his colleagues at work, but he does not share it with his family. What is known by an individual may be unknown to other individuals. So, in order to share a common world-view and to maintain its existence, individuals must act upon each other so that they can share the common knowledge. The most important key for the acquisition of knowledge is probably through the process of socialization where people have to act upon each other. (Berger and Luckmann deal very much with the problem of knowledge in the social world in: "Social Construction of Reality").

(10) Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, op. cit., p.54.

It has also been found that in primary socialization a child is presented by society with a predefined set of individuals (firstly his parents for instance) to be his early identification. There is no choice for him for the identification. He spends most of the time at home with his parents. Therefore, only his parents are close to him and he must identify his parents' roles and attitudes before he can identify others. In other words, his early identification, is predetermined by his parents' roles and attitudes. Only then, he could identify roles and attitudes of others.

The individual is therefore, forced to form his early relationship first with his parents. He considers every activity of his parents as natural. The world of a child is so constituted and he may have the feeling that everything within it is permanent and secure. It can be said that the world of childhood is likely to retain its peculiar reality in retrospection. The individual's first world is thus constructed in primary socialization. He considers everything confidently as a reality. This is the moment that a child begins to realize the reality of the world although it

is yet limited to the "home-world". It will, however be useful in his further realization of the real social world outside his family where he undergoes a more complex socialization with other individuals.

Another factor of primary socialization is learning sequences that are socially defined. A child for example, learns something from his parents sequentially. Firstly, he may learn how to talk properly, later on, how to read. The sequence in the learning process has some social recognition of biological growth and differentiation. The society thus, must recognize that a one-year-old child cannot be expected to learn what a three-year-old can. Such recognition is, of course, imposed on society by biological facts.

These are some of the basic factors of primary socialization in which a child should undergo before he becomes a member of a social world. Socialization, as we have said earlier in this chapter, is a life-long process. It is never ended and never finished. We could say, however, that primary socialization ends when the individual has established the concept of the generalization in his consciousness. He now begins to

know himself as well as other individuals in his social world. He is able to generalize roles and attitudes of his parents and his family to other individuals in the wider social world.

An individual undergoes secondary socialization when he has completed (although it is never finally completed) his primary socialization. He now comes to a more complex form of socialization. The home-world of primary socialization can be considered as a base-world upon which he can construct a wider social world through secondary socialization.

Secondary socialization is often thought as the "internalization" of institutional or institution-based sub-worlds. Its extent and character, says Berger ⁽¹¹⁾ are determined by the complexity of the division of labour and the concomitant social distribution of knowledge. It can be described as the acquisition of role-specific knowledge, the roles being directly or indirectly rooted in the division of labour. It also requires the acquisition of role-specific

(11) Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, op. cit., p.158

vocabularies, training, meanings, values and conduct within an institutional division of labour. For example, a differentiation may arise between teachers and soldiers. Both have to undergo a special training, have to acquire special vocabularies, meanings, values and conduct before becoming teachers and soldiers. Teachers spend most of their working hours at schools, while soldiers at country borders to protect the country. They probably employ different symbols when they are at work. Teachers cannot acquire the specific knowledge of soldiers because they have never been trained in the military camp. So, each of them has its own specific-knowledge about the sub-worlds in which they belong to.

The formal processes of secondary socialization must deal with an already primary socialized individual who has acquired the meaning of the social world. We cannot expect an individual to construct a social world without first undergoing the early stage of socialization. An individual for instance, when he comes to secondary socialization he can teach his pupils to keep everything clean if he has learnt the importance of his own cleanliness. So, he can trans-

fer the importance of cleanliness when he comes to secondary socialization.

Biological limitations to the learning sequence become less important in secondary socialization. Instead, the intrinsic values, that is the foundational structure of that knowledge is more important. For example, it can be established that one must have a secondary school education before he can join the university education. So, the foundational structure of education itself is more important rather than his biological limitations.

Another form of secondary socialization is the detachment of roles from one individual to another. During the primary socialization, a child learns only roles and attitudes of his parents. But in secondary socialization, an individual begins to know that roles and attitudes of an individual can also be performed by others. For example, history is taught by a teacher, but can also be taught by another teacher of history.

The processes of secondary socialization do not presuppose a high degree of identification. Therefore,

in some cases, special techniques must be employed to produce whatever identification is seen as necessary. An individual should give a full commitment to the new reality that he wants to acquire. For example, an individual who intends to become a priest may volunteer to commit himself to religious education and activities. Engineering education on the other hand, can be acquired formally. It is not necessary for him to study engineering subjects if he wants to become a priest. Both of them lie in the different bodies of knowledge. The choice, thus, can be made by himself without referring to any predetermined identification. Therefore, sometimes it is necessary to employ the intensifying technique so that the individual can get whatever identification he needs. He has more freedom of choice of reality when he comes to secondary socialization because he enters a bigger social world.

These are some of the forms of primary and secondary socialization of an individual. Through these two processes, an individual now can enter the social world and become a member of that social world. He can participate in the social world activities by interacting to other individuals in his social world.

Besides these it is necessary to deal briefly with interpersonal behaviour of individuals in a social world. There are several basic motivational sources of interpersonal behaviour which have been extensively studied by psychologists and others. Only a few of them are of particular significance for the purpose of this study. It is believed that these factors will produce attitudes of cooperation and mutual interaction between one individual and another in one social world.

It has been found that social behaviour is very much influenced by non-social drives. Basic biological drives, such as the need for food and water, the need for money, may lead to various kinds of interaction. C.J. Adcock (1976) says that an individual will employ all his intelligence, his abilities and all his past experience in order to satisfy his biological need. ⁽¹²⁾ So, they may result in drawing together the numbers of the society in a cooperative task which none could accomplish alone. An individual needs co-

(12) C.J. Adcock, Fundamentals of Psychology, first published 1959, (Penguin Books, reprinted 1976), p.35.

operation from other individuals in order to produce food for instance. He will not be able to live in a complete isolation from others. He needs interaction with others in order to obtain his necessity in his social world. It is something instinctually created by society and every individual is obliged to follow this socially constructed norm. We have seen, therefore, the individual's interaction may produce a stable society in the social world where they belong to.

Another way in which non-social drives can produce social behaviour is where people seek information of some kind. Some people for example, may take a lot of trouble to gain certain types of information they need. It has been found that some conformity behaviour occurs because people believe that the others are better informed than they are themselves. There is a certain amount of evidence to show that people seek out the company of others in order to check their opinions, especially when it is difficult to check them more directly. These are some ways in which people may come together and engage in social interaction.

Another possible root of social behaviour is dependency. The goals of dependency are a close and submissive relation with parents, and later on with other people. Dependent behaviour may be directed to people in power and authority or towards equals. Parents perhaps would be the first to be directed and interacted by children. Most children develop a pattern of dependency towards their parents, and often have to be trained out of it from childhood to adolescence. This is the earliest kind of attachment to other people. Studies of institutionalized children show that the ones who have never experienced parental nurture are very low in dependency, while those who have are very high. Then, gradually dependency will develop, and it may generalize to other people or adults in authority and even to members of their peer groups. It is believed to be the earliest form of socialization process for a child.

It has also been found that imitation is another common response in social interaction. An individual's behaviour may be imitated by other individuals when they interact (individuals in a peer group for instance). If "A" behaves in a certain way while interacting with "B", it is likely that "B" will

start doing the same. The response would be greater if "B" considers "A" as higher or more dominant in personality than himself. In the larger social groups, where interaction may take place between a number of people, there may be differences of power, status or role in that organization. Thus, who is considered to be the most dominant, would be the leader or his behaviour would be imitated by other members. Once again, this is evidently true for the early process of socialization in children.

Another significant aspect of social interaction is the existence of "norms" within a social group. These norms normally control the behaviour of individuals in that society. In addition to this, Argyle says,

" All small social groups develop "norm" i.e shared patterns of perceiving and thinking, shared modes of communication, interaction and appearance, common attitudes and beliefs, and shared ways of doing whatever the group does. Members will have something in common from the beginning, and there is also convergence towards shared norms, particularly on the part of individual deviates. Such norms will govern the styles of social behaviour which are approved and admired. Anyone who fails to conform is placed under pressure to do so, and if he does not is rejected." (13)

(13) Michael Argyle, op. cit., p.129.

These norms are common to any social group. For example, "A" cannot sleep with his sister "X", can be found also in another social group. Husband should be the head of a family for instance. So, all these types of social norms are created by members of society and will be transformed to the next generation if the existing social world remain unchanged (stable).

To be a member of a social world, an individual should always behave in the most acceptable form of conduct which is recognized by other individuals in his social world. Here again, norms play a significant part. If stealing for example, is considered as evil by his social norm, then he should not steal. To behave against this norm leads to the rejection by his social group. Therefore, society has always been able to establish norms for individuals. Perhaps, it is not extravagant to say that society always rules individuals especially in culture. It also directs individuals to a particular kind of world-view so that every individual will have the same world-view.

We have, thus, discovered that socialization helps individuals to learn roles and attitudes of

others. Individuals must act upon each other because they are directed by their biological instincts to interact with other individuals. This interaction, of course, leads to the formation of a common activity and produces an institution called "society". An individual comes to discover the social world and participates in its activity. He together with other individuals produce society where they can live together. Society therefore, is a product of human activity through their mutual interaction and interpersonal relationship.

Society imposes certain rules on individuals so that every member will live in harmony. Family life for instance, is instituted to deal with the sexual instinct of members of the society. For a society for example, adultery is strictly prohibited. In order to fulfill the sexual instinct of every individual, there is an establishment of marriage institution. So, what is found in a society, is in fact a product of individuals because this society is produced by them.

Men in the society invent tools and equipment to cope with their daily needs. They study science in order to produce a better technological instruments. All these tools and equipment as well as other human discoveries are invented for themselves for the sake of their own lives. These are included in the term "culture". In its simplest meaning, culture means what men have produced in the social world including their way of life. We could say therefore, man together with other men produced culture which is both material and non-material. (14)

Culture, which is produced by men is objective. It can be shared with others. Individuals for example, can utilize tools and equipment invented by other men either in the same society or from other society because these are invented for the benefit of all human kinds. In the second division of culture (non-material), which is understood as society, it can direct sanctions, controls and punishes individual conducts. Therefore, the role of society is so vital in

(14) The division of culture into material and non-material in this sense is merely subjective. Tools and equipment for instance, are considered as material culture, while society is understood as non-material culture.

order to produce individuals. The link between individuals and the society is so important and inter-related because society itself is produced by individuals. So, every individual should play his role in order to produce society. It is as the result of the interaction of individuals so that the society can exist.

Once society is formed, it provides a world for individuals to inhabit. The individual existence in the social world is one of the examples of what society has provided for them. Therefore, an individual should know his role in society and he should also know himself internally or objectively. If every one knows his role and participates in the social world activity he will share its common world-view. It is the world-view that is considered as the most important reality for the social world. Consequently, in order to maintain the existence of the world-view and its reality, constituent elements of the objectivity of society is essential. We have seen for instance, sex is instituted through marriage institutions. So, the main purpose of the constituent element of society is to maintain the continuous exis-

tence of reality in the social world which is shared with others.

A man cannot exist in the social world without continually interacting and communicating with others. Individuals should share the reality (world-view) of the social world with others because it is an intersubjective world. Every individual should know that his natural attitude to the social world corresponds to the natural attitude of others. In other words, an individual should know that there is an ongoing correspondence between his meaning (reality) and other's meaning in this social world and that they share a common sense about its reality. Therefore, the natural attitude is the attitude of common sense consciousness precisely because it refers to social world that is common to many individuals. So, the reality of the social world is taken for granted as a reality as long as it is presented as an intersubjective social world. This intersubjectivity sharply differentiates the reality of the social world from other types of realities. A man for example, is alone in the world of his dreams, but he knows that the social world is common to others as it is to himself.

Chapter Two

INSTABILITY OF THE SOCIAL WORLD

In the last chapter, we have discussed the nature of the social world and how an individual comes to enter it. It has its own world-view and individuals accept the reality ⁽¹⁾ of the social world simply because they are products of it. But can it last forever ? How long can the reality of the social world be sustained ? If it cannot maintain its reality, what are the possible factors of its instability ? These are some of the problems that now concern us. As we shall see in Part Two, the instability of the social world is a necessary condition for conversion.

The individual takes for granted the reality of the social world around him, until something comes

(1) What is meant by "reality" in this study is a subjective reality. The social world for example, is a reality because everyone who lives in it accepts it as a real world.

to disturb or challenge this assumption. We may take the small scale example of a little girl playing with her doll. For her, she is actually a mother, and her doll is her child. So, the play-world of the little girl is real for her as long as it remains undisturbed. Suddenly, her mother comes and asks her to go to bed. The interference of mother is a challenge to the reality of her play-world. It begins to break down and becomes unstable.

Another example is that of a man watching a film on television. The story interests him and he becomes engrossed in it as if he were watching the actual events happening in front of him. Suddenly, someone knocks at the door or there is a noise outside. He suddenly becomes conscious of where he is and the reality of the television world is disturbed. He begins to realize that he is actually in the room; that is the real world.

We can apply these two small examples to the larger social world. The instability of world-view is directly related to the instability of the social world.

With regard to the reality of the social world, it is important to note that the orders of its reality are constituted through the meaning of an experience. In other words the finite "province of meaning" (2) will be the accent of reality. The finite character of a province of meaning (of the social world or the world of dreams) rests upon the character of the unity of its own peculiar meaning of the social world. Consequently, the harmony and compatibility of a reality are restricted to a given province of meaning. If they are undisturbed, and the province of meaning is maintained to be continuously accepted, they would remain as reality. Every individual in the social world is expected to accept the same province of Meaning.

The social world may become unstable if socialization is not complete. We can speak about of various possible factors of instability of the social world. These factors makes an individual suspicious about his existing reality of the social world.

(2) This phrase is frequently used in this dissertation. It means, the subjective reality or the meaning or the world-view of a social world which is accepted by individuals as real and provides meaning, purpose and values for life.

Changing cultural patterns are significant in producing instability in a social world. The effect is more evident if an individual has undergone socialization successfully. A man for example, is brought up and socialized in a Middle East country where kissing in public is illegal and shameful. Since he has been socialized within that social world, he accepts it as a reality. As long as it is not socially challenged, it does not constitute any problem for him. Suppose that every summer a group of tourists from Europe and the United States of America come to visit that country. For them, who have been socialized in the U.S.A. and European cultures, kissing in public is legal and it is merely a way of expressing appreciation of someone. Therefore, the new culture brought by tourists becomes a challenge to his existing culture: he begins to doubt the reality of his own culture. More and more questions arise in his mind. Subsequently, the existing reality of his social world is interrupted and becomes unstable. So, the instability of the meaning of the social world can take place in spite of complete socialization which he underwent for many years before the tourists come.

Education is also one of the factors leading to the instability of a social world. An individual who has been socialized in a family in a village will be the most typical example. In Malaysia for example, the best student from each primary school in rural areas will be offered a place to study at one of the leading boarding schools in town. A boy who has been socialized in an agricultural social world (the majority of people in rural areas in Malaysia depend much upon agriculture) may view education as less important because he always identifies with the roles and attitudes of his parents and other individuals in his agricultural world. When he comes to study at the boarding school in town, he has an opportunity to learn many subjects. He begins to realize that there are several other possibilities for him to up-grade his social position. His education provides a wider world-view in the sense that he is not predetermined to be a traditional farmer like his parents. Instead, through education, he can become an engineer in agriculture, or a doctor, or a scientist, to mention but a few possibilities. Therefore, his existing reality, his social world begins to be interrupted by educational factors. So, his world-view is likely to break down and become unstable.

Economic factors also cause instability, contributing to the break down of a social world. For example, a poor man decides to start his own business. He must start his business from the bottom. He works hard and becomes successful and gains a higher economic status. If he was formerly a small business man, now he becomes a millionaire. He may view the world differently from how he did previously. He may come to realize that the real world is the world of business. Now he feels necessary to buy a bigger house, a new car and he has to meet other successful businessmen. Subsequently, his reality of the social world changes accordingly. So, the success of his business contributes a challenge to his existing world-view and leads to the instability.

Instability is frequently affected by further reading or through new experience. For example, an individual has been socialized in a Communist country and he has been brought up in a Communist social world. His world-view is, therefore, based on Communism-Marxism. Eventually, he comes to Britain to do his further study and spends two or three years in Britain in order to complete his studies. During that time, he learns how people in Britain can live without the idea of Communism.

He may also read books on other political ideologies during his study at the university. His reading and experience of life in Britain become a challenge to his existing world-view. He begins to realize that life in Britain has more freedom particularly in private ownership. So, this experience leads to the instability of his existing world-view. It has been shocked and interrupted by his new experience. Experience therefore, is one of the factors which lead to the instability of a world-view.

The reality of the social world would remain stable if there were a continuous confirmation of reality from other individuals and institutions in the social world. Lack of reality confirmation would lead to the loss of identity and the stability of the social world. An individual for instance, must continuously associate himself with other members of society, such as social club, church, office, neighbours and the like so that his existing identity can be guaranteed and reality continuously confirmed by them. If he withdraws himself from these social groups, he may lose his identity and confidence about his own identity as well as his reality of the social world.

Sooner, or later, his social world becomes unstable.

It has also been found that the consistency of the individual's social situation is one of the most important factors of stability of the social world. An individual for instance, may regard his wife as the most important person in his life. He always expects love and tolerance from his wife. But if his wife ceases her identification of her husband as a man of importance or does not love him any more, obviously her attitude becomes a challenge to the existing reality of her husband. He begins to realize that his social world is unstable. He cannot rely on his wife to conform his self-image. Therefore, the inconsistency of appreciation from other people (especially the one who is the most important) may also lead to the instability of social world. The reality of his social world begins to break down.

The loss of the social confirmation on one's self identification as a man of importance is also another factor of instability of a world-view. An individual self-identification as a man of importance

is very much dependent upon the social appreciation and confirmation. As long as the self-identification can be maintained, an individual will act in the world confidently and he will view the social world optimistically because he believes that his social world is real and stable. For example, an individual maintains his Catholic faith only if he retains his significant relationship with the Catholic community. Confirmation and appreciation will be continuously provided by his community as long as he retains his relationship. But if he loses contact with that community or the community does not confirm his belief, he will surely lose his self-identification.

Previously we noted that language may help to produce and maintain a social world. But it can also lead to its break down. It is a significant instrument of the relationship between one to another in the social world. The province of meaning of the social world could be sustained as long as individuals gain the common meaning about the social world. Language, thus, always functions as the most significant instrument by which individuals can communicate each other so that the same province of meaning continues to exist. Berger and Luckmann say,

" The common objectivations of everyday life are maintained primarily by linguistic signification. Everyday life is, above all, life with and by means of the language I share with my fellow men. An understanding of language is thus essential for understanding of the reality of everyday life." (3)

Very often, it has been found that the reality of the social world is built up upon the foundation of language because through the medium of language an individual can share the existing knowledge about the social world. Knowledge always has the capacity to transcend all occurrences in the social world and it also bridges different zones within the reality of the social world and integrates them into a meaningful whole. Through language too, an individual is able to actualize the meaning of the social world.

Language exists because individuals continue to employ it in the social world communication. If one of the rules and orders of language is broken down, individuals will not gain a perfect meaning of the social world. It certainly leads to the discontinuance of reality of the social world. Finally it will be followed by the instability of that social

(3) Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, First published in the U.S.A. 1966, (Middlesex: Penguin Book Ltd., reprinted 1976), p.51.

world. For example, in a multi-racial country like Malaysia, there must be a national language as a medium of communication between the three races, that is Malays, Chinese and Indians. The present government has legislated that the Malay language should be recognized as the national language. Every citizen must employ it at all levels of communication. All official letters of correspondence should be written in Malay. It is widely used in schools, colleges and universities as the medium of instruction. If a Chinese who is born in Malaysia and a Malaysian citizen cannot speak Malay fluently, and his Malay language is very poor, he must have difficulties in understanding the world-view of people in the country. It is, thus, believed that his language handicapped leads to the discontinuance of world-view of the social world in Malaysia. He can not share the same world-view or meaning of the existing social world. So, the stability of his world-view begins to break down.

The role of language in the reality maintenance can also be described in terms of a "common language", that is, from the language of a particu-

lar group (race) to the language of the national community that defines itself in terms of language. An individual is always expecting the continuing use of the same language to guarantee the continuance of his existing world-view. Let us say for example, a Chinese meets another Chinese at the post office. He is supposed to speak in Mandarin and he also expects that his fellow Chinese will speak in Mandarin too. This situation makes him feel that his Chinese identity continues to exist. On the other hand, if his fellow Chinese speaks in another language (Malay for instance) to him, he suddenly feels that his reality (his Chinese identity) begins to break down. His identity becomes unstable, because he may presuppose that his Chinese identity has not been confirmed by his fellow Chinese. This is also one of the possibilities which can lead to the instability of a world-view and social world.

Therefore the conversational instrument (language) must be continual and consistent in order to maintain the existing reality effectively. Disruption of continuity or consistency is therefore, a threat to the stability of the existing

reality. The effect is more evident on the discontinuity or inconsistency in the same type of language. Language, thus, plays a significant part in order to confirm the stability of identity as well as the world-view of an individual.

Conversation plays an important part in the individual interaction with other men. It is the medium which people can speak with one another. The continuity of reality of an individual is very much dependent upon the virtue of conversation. It is important to stress however, that the effect of conversation on the stability of the social world is implicit, not explicit. Most conversation does not in so many words define the nature of the world. Rather, it takes place against the background of a world that is previously accepted as real. For example, an individual is confronted with a new set of meaning which is brought about by the mass-media. When he listens to the radio, or he watches television or he reads newspaper, he may find that these media introduce him to another set of meanings of the social world. He begins to be suspicious about the reality of his existing world-view because all these

media are speaking about the knowledge of another world-view. It seems to him that his existing world-view becomes meaningless because what he expects from these media does not come to confirm his world-view. Therefore, it is possible that this aspect of conversation may lead to the instability of his world-view.

Suspicion is a characteristic of the break down or at least the instability of the social world. The individual begins to suspect its adequacy of its existing world-view thus can eventually lead to the break down of his acceptance of its reality of its social world. Schutz and Luckmann (1974) consider suspicion as a motivational factor of break down which is followed by "leap" ⁽⁴⁾ to another province of meaning. Schutz says,

(4) LEAP is used in this study to imply a transition, or a movement, or a migration from one social world to another, or from one province of meaning to another. Instead of using the word "leap", sometimes the word "transition" is also used frequently. The term comes from KIERKEGAARD and will be central in analysing conversion.

" The 'suspicion', if it affects the various moments of the relative opacity of the life-world in general (mostly through the shock of "crises" not easily mastered), can motivate a 'leap' into noneveryday provinces of reality. From these provinces the life worldly stock of knowledge can appear as completely insufficient. The world can become a mystery that becomes transparent only by means of knowledge superordinated to everyday reality.." (5)

Although he wants to show the danger of the structure of negative knowledge (based on the presupposition of the general knowledge of the life-world), the theory of suspicion is of great importance for this study. We have seen that an individual who has been fully socialized always expects continuity of meaning of his social world. The discontinuity of meaning or perhaps the interruption from other provinces of meaning would always lead to the suspicion of the already constructed province of meaning. It is followed by the breakdown of the existing province of meaning and that individual feels his social world becoming unstable. For example, if he finds, through conversation with his wife grounds for suspicion about their marriage relationship, he would be suddenly shocked by that

(5) Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann, The Structures of the Life-World, (London: Heinemann, 1974), p.171.

conversation. He may find himself in a crisis because the existing meaning of his marriage relationship has been threatened. Another example of suspicion is that of a village boy who needs not become like his father. He may have conversation with other individuals and he is told that he does not necessarily become a farmer like his father. There are several opportunities for him to up-grade his social position. He may also read newspapers and get another opportunity which is advertised in the newspaper. So he becomes suspicious about the reality of his existing world-view because the conversation has introduced him another set of meaning in life. Therefore, suspicion is always a characteristic of instability of a world-view.

It is believed that separation or isolation of an individual from his fellow-men in the social-world would also lead to the instability of his world-view. We can speak about various kinds of separation which frequently affect on individuals. Death for example, is the most extreme type of separation of an individual from his person of importance. A child for example, is very much dependent upon his parents in his early age during socialization.

If his father dies when he is young, the child will lose his dependency towards his father. It leads to the instability of his world-view. Or again, a world-view must take account of the fact of death, or it can on occasion seem inadequate. The individual in face of the problem of death may be dissatisfied and may look for another world-view which he believes can solve his problem. This will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Another example of separation is a broken marriage. A divorced wife may have several difficulties and problems when she becomes a divorcee. She may lose her identity and meaning in life. Her future becomes unknown and uncertain. This is evidently true for a wife who has no permanent source of income. So all these problems make her restless and unhappy about the existing social world. Finally, her world-view (particularly her identity in life) begins to break down gradually.

Separation is, therefore, one of the contributions leading to the instability of the existing world-view of an individual. It subsequently leads to the break down of the existing social world as well.

We have seen, therefore, the stability of a social world is very much dependent upon the continuity of world-view. And to live in a social world is to live in an ordered and meaningful life. According to Schutz,

" The province of meaning of this world retains the accent of reality as long as our practical experiences confirm its unity and harmony. It appears to us as "natural" reality, and we are not prepared to give up the attitude that is based upon it unless a special shock experience breaks through the meaning-structure of everyday reality and induces us to transfer the accent of reality to another province of meaning." (6)

We have indicated that a world-view is not always stable. The stability of the individual's existing social world is sometimes interrupted or disturbed by one of these factors and he therefore, must transfer to another world-view or province of meaning when his existing world-view has broken down. We shall speak about the transition or migration in the next chapter.

(6) Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann, op. cit., p.35.

Chapter Three

MIGRATION BETWEEN SOCIAL WORLDS

In the previous chapters we have discussed the maintainance of the socially constructed world and also the most important factors' in the break down of the world-view. Our main task in this chapter is to investigate the nature of the transition from one province of meaning to another. This can be clarified by a series of examples.

The first example concerns the transition between the world of the village (a remote area such as can be found today in Malaysia which has no contact with urban development), and the world of the city. The reality of the social world differs from the first to the second one and they exemplify two contrasting provinces of meaning.

Individuals who live in a remote village may never be exposed to the complicated development of modern science and technology in the city. They earn their living by developing their lands, using traditional tools and equipment. Norms and codes of conduct are based upon their own social environment. Community leaders are appointed from among themselves. Such things constitute reality for them, a province of meaning.

Now, if we look at the socially constructed society in the city, the phenomena are totally different. The city has modern infra-structures, modern technology and everything seems to be very impersonal. People who live in the city act according to their own culture. They might have different ways of life from that of the villagers. They would have different attitudes, patterns of behaviour and even values.

The two socially constructed worlds in the above examples constitute two different provinces of meaning. Let us say for example, one of the villagers goes out to the city. His first impression would surprise him. He would find that living in the

city is full of challenge and competition. He would be a stranger and everything he met in the city would be strange to him. He would begin to learn new things and even adopt new attitudes. He would find his new experience would be in conflict with his traditional life. The conflict might lead to a break down in its traditional world-view which he shared. It would not be very surprising if he suddenly accepted the life in the city. Therefore, he would have moved from his former province of meaning (life in the village) to a new province of meaning (life in the city). In this example, the transition to the new province of meaning seems to be a sudden one. He suddenly enters the new social world which is believed to be more satisfactory to him. We shall later discuss its significance of its sudden resolution of his crisis.

A second example of a transition from one world to another or province of meaning to another, concerns the place of women in a society. The most interesting example can be seen in the women's movement in Iran today. Traditionally, Muslim women in Iran (perhaps in many other countries where Islamic Law is strictly imposed) are obliged to wear

veils together with their traditional dresses. This was always accepted without question as being natural. They had been socialized into accepting this custom as being the proper way to behave. However, when Western practices became known and Western women visited Iran (and Iranian women visited the West) the traditional practices could no longer be taken for granted.

The Western world-view provided an alternative province of meaning. For some women its province of meaning now defined what was real and today many women in Iran are fighting to release themselves from the traditional way of dress to the Western style in particular. Veils as well as traditional dresses are recently rejected. It means that, they want to move to another province of meaning. They have migrated to a reality which they believe to be more credible.

We have described the transition so far as a "migration" but of course the same issues are raised in actual physical migrations, when a group of people emigrate from one country to another.

The change of meaning of the social world is more obvious if the two countries have different world-views. A good example of this type of transition is that of the emigration of Indians to Britain. On their arrival in Britain, they are often met and welcomed by an Indian family who have been in Britain for many years, who perhaps belong to an established Indian community in Britain.

By settling in an area with an existing Indian community, there may be a conflict for them between two cultures. Although they had left their own country, they cannot completely forget their own culture. But because they live with other Indian families, Indian culture is reconstructed as soon as they arrive in Britain. In their homes and social contacts they are Indian in culture, Indian in the way of life and Indian in world-view. This phenomenon would be clearer if we looked at each of these families from inside. The elderly Indians will be more attached to Indian culture at home because they have little contact with local people outside their families. The possibility is higher for them to continue their Indian way of life even though they are in Britain.

For them, the Indian world-view is maintained as the real world: they are able to sustain their traditional province of meaning.

The situation will be quite different for parents or other members of the family who have to go out to work or to school. When they go out to work for example, they meet local people and they interact with them. They get jobs in factories, meet friends there and have to adopt Western cultural standards and values, quite different from their own. As a result, they are confronted with a conflict of two cultures: Indian culture at home, and local culture at work. They must adopt Western culture when they are at work and many other places, but they must re-enter the Indian social world when they get home. The conflict may lead them to accept the new reality of the social world which is provided by the local people. Sooner or later, the breakdown of its traditional Indian social world would bring them to adopt completely the new province of meaning provided by local people.

In addition to such a crisis among adults its conflict also affects children. Perhaps, the conflict among children is less serious because they are more flexible to the new situation. They spend most of the time with their local social group. The play world as well as the school world of these children is centred to the type of local socially constructed world. Because of this, these children are more easily converted to the local social world. Religion is also affected in this process of socialization.

Another aspect of transition to be pointed out is that of the socially marginal people. We are speaking about a group of people who have no direct contact with others. The socialization process is not the same as with other people and cause some people to be socially different from others. A particular example is that of handicapped persons. Handicapped people have only limited contact with other people in that society. They might be handicapped when they were born or they might suffer from illness for many years. Consequently, they might have different world-views about the social world.

They are unable to participate in the world construction of reality. They may not go to school as others do. They may not have broad social knowledge about their own social world. Therefore, it is not surprising if they deviate from the existing socially constructed world to another province of meaning which is applicable for them.

Here, the transition process seems to be gradual. They are unable to develop the new province of meaning in shorter period soon after the break down. However, the failure to have a direct contact with other men in the social world would gradually lead them to lose their conviction to the existing social world. The social world around them might not compatible with them. Then, gradually they begin to construct another province of meaning as the result of their incompatibility with the old social world. Thus, different degrees of socialization would also possible to lead people transfer to another social world.

Another possible factor is that of an assumption that deviant behaviour (including conversion) arises from the failure of socialization. There are individuals in a social world who are not fully socialized and whose behaviour is deviant. This may reflect an alternative province of meaning. Their early background would be helpful in describing this phenomenon.

There are people who do not undergo a normal process of socialization during their early personality development. We may take a lonely child for example in describing the abnormal process of socialization. Suppose his mother was dead when he was a small child and his father did not look after him properly. He is not properly educated and always left alone at home. He did not have similar opportunities to share the play world of his social group of his age. In other words, he is neglected by his parents or perhaps by his social group. Although he developed biologically as any other children do, he is not fully socialized to be a normal man in future. His early background was different

from others in his own social world. Therefore, it is possible for him to form his own world-view and finally exhibit deviant behaviour. He would continue to behave against the norms and sanctions of the social world around him.

A most interesting example of the above assumption is that of Lee Harvey Oswald who was accused of murdering President Kennedy. Quite apart from its legal question of whether he committed murder, another question arose. Since he is an American, why did he try to shoot his own President? Was he normal at the time he committed the murder? Investigations indicate that his early background was deviant from the normal process of socialization. His early background led him to behave against the social norms of his society. In other words, his failure of socialization led him to commit the crime. An action which is unacceptable to most Americans may be quite natural to a man who has emigrated to another province of meaning.

A special training experience can also be a factor of transition from one province of meaning to another. An individual who has been fully socialized in a particular social world would view the world differently when he has completed a special training for his job. For example, an individual might think that discipline was not important for a man like him before he joined the army. When he joined the army, he underwent a special training for one year for instance. As an army officer, he began to realize that discipline is very essential in life. He thus finds another province of meaning in life as an army officer. Therefore, his transition from one province of meaning (the meaning before he joined the army) to another province of meaning is considered as a transition.

Another possible factor to make an individual transfers to another world-view is that of the type of work or social relations which he involves in the social world. A teacher for example, comes into contact with his neighbour, a successful business man. They often meet together and discuss about

the present job. His neighbour keeps telling him that business has a good prospect in future. He gains big profits every month, he has two cars, two houses, and a big supermarket where a number of people serving under him. All these things interest him very much. He begins to realize that teaching profession does not contribute much money to him. So, his existing world-view begins to break down. Later, he decides to give up the teaching profession and start a business. He finds that his business has a good prospect too. So, his transition from the world of teaching to the world of business provides him another province of meaning and it is one of the examples of transition.

Sometimes, it is difficult for an individual to move from one social world to another if the first one is enjoyable for him. Most people like to continue with the existing social world, because they believe it can be the only world in which they gain pleasure and happiness. Suppose a man is asked to retire early at 50 instead of 65 because of the unemployment situation,

he will surely fight against this. Why should he fight ? He may think that he is healthy enough to handle the job although he is 50 years old, he loves the job, and if he retires early means he will lose his permanent income. But apart from the financial question, "work" may also provide meaning and purpose for life. Retirement would be a forced exile from his province of meaning. He would have to discover a new province or perhaps die of boredom.

Then, he reluctantly retires from his job. In order to seek for pleasure and happiness, he involves himself in a children's charity club for instance. By organizing this charity club he expects to get a new life as substitution for the lost one. After a period of time, he finally finds pleasure and happiness in his new social world. His new activity is able to provide him with another province of meaning. He is now aware that his transition to the new social world is really satisfactory for him.

If we refer back to the above example, it is clear that the speed of transition is different between individual and social types of transition. It is found that the individual transition is more sudden and the social one is rather cumulative.

What is left to be pointed out here is the existence of alternatives. All of the examples mentioned above indicate that people would transfer to another world if they were provided with proper alternatives to substitute for the old one. They would be able to leave their former social world if the new social world were introduced to them. All problems and conflicts in the old province of meaning would disappear as soon as the transition took place. Individuals now enter the newly constructed social world which is now more real. But how can they enter the new province of meaning ? With regard to this, Schutz says,

" The transition from one province of meaning to another can only be accomplished by means of a "leap" (Kierkegaard's sense). This "leap" is nothing other than the exchange of one style of lived experience for another." (1)

(1) Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann, The Structures of the Life-Worlds, (London: Heinemann, 1974), p.24.

If we look again at our previous examples, such a leap takes place whenever they move from one province of meaning to another. Having indicated its possibility of migration, we must now consider the psychological factors involved in accepting or rejecting its possibility.

Chapter Four

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN THE TRANSITION

The instability of a social world or a world-view can lead to a transition to another world-view. We have suggested that there are several factors which could lead to the instability of a social world and thus open its possibility of migration. We must now consider the psychological factors which can lead an individual to transfer to another province of meaning.

It is obviously difficult for an individual to transfer to another province of meaning because the existing province of meaning is identified with the real. He has been socialized to become a member of that social world and transition is thus not simply a rational issue but involves psychological considerations.

The present discussion can be divided into two parts, that is, resistance and attraction. The individual is often reluctant to emigrate to another province of meaning as long as he can resist the challenge of the new alternative. But if the challenge is strong and the new alternative is more attractive, he must transfer to the new province of meaning. The mere existence of an alternative is not enough to cause the migration.

Normally, the instability of a social world does not suddenly force an individual to transfer to the new alternative at once. At the beginning, he may react against the new challenge and probably resist it as long as he can maintain the existing world-view. Since he has been socialized within the existing social world and has been familiar with it, he may have negative association with the new alternative. He assumes that the new alternative is merely a challenge and therefore he does not investigate it thoroughly. His strong identification to the existing reality makes him reluctant to become interested in the new alternative. This attitude leads him to resistance and try to defend his existing

reality.

There are several psychological factors of resistance which can lead an individual reluctant to transfer to another province of meaning. Firstly, reluctance to admit problems that come to challenge the existing province of meaning is possible to cause resistance. An individual may think that he will be able to face the challenge of the new alternative because he has been socialized within a particular social world and has been familiar with its existing world-view. For example, an Indian who emigrates into Britain may believe that he could continue to maintain his Indian world-view in the social world in Britain. Although many problems come to him when he comes to the new social world, he is reluctant to transfer to the local world-view.

Secondly, the identity of the existing world-view may lead an individual to resistance. Identity is always a significant element of a world-view for any social world. It is formed by social processes. Therefore, an identity is usually maintained or modified or reshaped by social relations.

The social processes involved in both the formation and the maintainance of identity are thus determined by the social structure of a social world. Since an individual is socialized within a particular social world, he will certainly perform his identity to the world-view of his own social world. Therefore, we can say that an Indian has different identity than a British because they have been socialized in the two different social worlds as well as its world-views.

Subsequently, there is evidence to show that the identity leads an individual to resist the challenge from the new world-view. For example, an Indian who emigrates into Britain tries to maintain his identity by reconstructing his own social world in Britain. Although he is confronted with various challenges from the local social world in Britain, he could still resist them. He probably thinks that by moving to another world-view he will certainly lose his existing identity.

Thirdly, self-confidence of an individual is also possible to cause resistance. Very often,

an individual's self-confidence is derived from the continuous confirmation from other individuals in the social world. In a fully constructed social world, every member must share the same world-view with others. Everyone is therefore, confident about his world-view because it is also shared by others. So, the continuous recognition from other members will certainly make him more confident in face of the new challenge. Therefore, self-confidence of an individual is one of the contributions to resistance.

Fourthly, uncertainty about the new world-view (that is the reality of the new alternative) may also lead an individual to resistance. The individual has to undergo the process of resocialization when he transfers to the new social world. He has to resemble the primary socialization as soon as he enters the new alternative. Since he has been socialized in the existing social world, it is difficult for him to undergo resocialization process. The existing world-view is conceived as real and he is pretty sure about its reality. On the other hand, the reality of the new alternative

has not yet been proved and it has just come to him. In other words, the reality of the new alternative is not yet certain. It will be safer for him to stay in the existing world-view and maintain its reality as long as he can. For example, a Scottish girl has been brought up and socialized in Scotland. She gets married with a Chinese student from the Republic of China for instance. After finishing his studies, he brings his wife back to China. The girl begins to discover that the social world in China is quite different from the social world in Scotland. When she comes to China, she has to learn many things in order to adjust and resocialize herself to the local way of life. She has to learn how to use Chinese chop-sticks for instance, she has to learn a new language and so forth. It must be difficult for her to learn the new way of life and therefore she tries to reconstruct her identity by using spoon and fork instead of using chop-sticks for the meal. She is not yet certain about the reality of the way of life in China and this inevitably leads her to resistance.

The fifth factor of resistance is the fear of moving to the new alternative. It is frequently associated with the uncertainty about the reality of the new alternative. It makes an individual hesitate to leave the existing province of meaning because the reality of the new one is not yet certain. Sometimes, the fear arises out of the less contact with the new social world. We may take for example the transition of an Indian family from the Indian social world to the local social world in Britain. The elderly Indians are more resistant than the other age groups because they use to stay at home and have little contact with local people. As a result, they do not fully understand the local world-view and this of course produces a fear of moving to the new world-view which is introduced by local people. Consequently, we have seen that the elderly Indians try to reconstruct the Indian way of life although they live in the new social world. It is therefore possible that resistance is caused by fear of moving to the new alternative.

Sometimes, the fear of moving to the new alternative is caused by the existence of social

recognition. An individual, as we have perviously shown, is a member of a social world. He together with other individuals constructed the social world and its meaning. As a member of a society, he should share the common world-view with other individuals in his social world. If he withdraws himself from the existing world-view, he no longer belongs to that social world. He will lose the society's recognition if he transfers to another world-view. He together with other individuals have to sustain the reality of the existing world-view. For example, an individual lives in Britain where the political system is not based on Communism. Suppose he visits a Communist country and reads several books on Communism, the confrontation between the two ideologies (that is Communism and non-Communism) arises in his mind. However, since he belongs to a non-Communist social world in Britain, he could resist the new experience. If he accepts Communism, it means, he no longer belongs to the existing world-view in Britain. He may not gain social recognition when he comes back to Britain. In order to maintain the social recognition, and to maintain his social position, he

resist the new alternative offered by Communism.

Finally, education can also lead an individual to resistance. Although education may produce both resistance and transition, we are more concerned on its resistance because the effect of education leading to transition has been discussed in the last chapter. For example, a child whose parents are well-educated will view the world differently from the child whose parents are not properly educated. If the child of the well-educated family is provided with proper education he will view education as an important aspect of his life. He will not grow up with a deviant behaviour. Therefore, proper education enables him to maintain his parents's world-view and he will grow up with it. His resistance is thus supported by the proper education which he gains during his socialization.

The degree of resistance seems to be stronger in social transition than in an individual transition because the individual transition is more sudden than the social one. If we refer to our previous examples, we can find that the indivi-

dual transition from the village to the city is more sudden than the transition of an Indian community in Britain to the local world-view. The individual has less capacity to reconstruct his village world-view when he moves to the city. As the result, his transition is more sudden than the social one. On the other hand, Indian community is found to have reconstructed the Indian culture when they arrive in Britain. These Indians have been successful in reconstructing and maintaining Indian culture for a longer period compared to the individual's transition to the city.

The second part of the psychological study of transition is attraction of the new alternative. In the previous discussion, it has been said that instability of a world-view will be followed by a transition or migration to the new world-view. An individual, however, is not willing to leave the existing world-view unless a new alternative is introduced to him. The speed of transition is normally dependent upon the attractiveness of the new alternative. If the new alternative is believed to be more attractive, an individual more readily move into it.

The new alternative should function as a release for the individual's anxiety when the new alternative is able to relieve the anxiety of an individual whenever his existing world-view becomes unstable and begins to break down. An individual must be convinced that his present anxiety will be ended as soon as he transfers to the new alternative. For example, the transition of an individual from village to city is motivated by the attractiveness of the modern life in city. When he comes to the city, he may be unsettled. The experience leads to a gradual instability of his existing world-view. However, he does not suddenly transfer because he still has doubts about the reality of the new life. His anxiety will be released entirely by returning home or going on to enter the new life of the city. Part of the attraction of the new world is the promise that it will end the period of anxiety.

The new alternative should also provide solutions or answers to the questions which led to the instability of the world-view. We may take for example the transition of women in Iran from the traditional world-view to the modern Western

world-view. When the traditional world-view has broken down and lost its meaning, Western cultures came to provide new solutions and offer a fuller life for them. The ability of the Western culture in this case is an attraction to them to speed up the transition. Therefore, the attraction of the new alternative depends much upon its capacity to provide satisfactory solutions to problems which cannot be solved by the existing world-view.

The attraction of the new alternative is also dependent upon the existence of a social base serving as the guide to transition. The social base must always be considered as important to an individual. A child of a Vietnamese refugee for instance, is adopted by a British family in Britain. His foster parents are considered as a social base for him so that he can establish a strong identification with the new social world in Britain. The existence of the foster parents is a guide to the child so that he can accept the reality in his new social world. The new alternative is, therefore, more attractive if there is a social base for an individual identification of a reality. It also serves as a guide to an individual transition.

The final examination should be made is the attitude of individual after his transition. It has been found that an individual cannot forget completely the previous meaning of the social world even after his transition. Transition requires processes of resocialization. It is more difficult than processes of socialization in the previous social world because resocialization is sometimes affected by the existing meaning in individual self. He is not socialized out of nothing because his previous meaning will sometimes disturb processes of resocialization. As the result, an individual tends to reshape or modify the world-view when he comes to enter the new province of meaning. Sometimes he tries to reinterpret the past province of meaning and then reshape it. We may take for example the transition of Indian community from Indian world-view to the local world-view in Britain. There is evidence to show that they cannot forget completely Indian culture although they have transferred to the social world in Britain. Language and dress for instance, are still Indian in nature as well as in fashion. In some cases, they reinterpret the local world-view and reshape it based on their own world-view. There is evidence to

show that transition to the new province of meaning or social world is not necessarily accompanied by a complete change in world-view of the individual involved.

The attitude of an individual towards transition has therefore, various psychological significance. Resistance and attraction are the areas of our psychological interest. We can say that psychological factors play a significant part in transition.

Having considered the social psychological factors in migration between provinces of meaning, we shall now apply this model in analysing religious migration, i.e conversion.

Part Two: RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

Chapter Five

RELIGION AND THE SOCIAL WORLD

Religion as a part of the world-view plays a significant role in the life of an individual in the social world. This chapter is intended to show how an individual growing up in a given society is socialized into its religion of that society, and how religion contributes to the reality construction as well as its maintainance. This discussion is the application of the model in Part One.

An individual growing up in a given society encounters religion as part of the social world. The process of socialization is the most important vehicle of the transmission of religious beliefs and attitudes from one individual to another. Thouless (1974) says,

" None of us develop our religious attitudes in isolation from our fellow-men; from childhood to old age we are receiving from the behaviour of those around us and from what is said by them influences that affect our religious attitudes." (1)

The transmission process seems to be more effective if the social norms are based on religious orders or at least coherent to the contents of religious orders. An individual's religious beliefs and attitudes can be developed on the basis of the belief system of other individuals in his society. If, for example, one lives in a Christian social world, he will certainly be very much influenced by the Christian world-view because it is the most dominant world-view in that society. It will appear to him quite naturally as a basis for its real world.

Religion, as part of the world-view is learnt by the individual from the preceding generations and passed onto the next. The process ensures a relative constancy of religious beliefs within that society. Argyle in his treatment of the transmission of religion says that religious behaviour, beliefs and

(1) Robert H. Thouless, An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion, first published 1971, 3rd. edition, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p.20

experiences are simply part of the culture, and regularly transmitted from one generation to generation, in the same way as any other customs.⁽²⁾ There is much obvious evidence for it, the fact that children reared in different parts of the world tend to acquire the local religious beliefs. Religion is, thus, a natural part of an individual life because it is already there when he comes to discover the world.

When a child comes to the social world, he is presented by society with a particular form of religious beliefs and attitudes together with other world-views. It is considered as part and parcel of the whole world-view because it is acquired through the same process of socialization. Therefore, the child accepts religion naturally without any question.

There is a predefined social group for each individual, firstly his parents, who provide his early identification of religious beliefs. Scobie

(2) Michael Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi B., The Social Psychology of Religion, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p.189.

for instance concludes that parental religious beliefs and attitudes are the important contributions to the transmission of religious beliefs. He says,

" the child's ideas and approach to religion are generally authoritarian in the sense that they are derived from other people, especially parents." (3)

The child spends most of the time at home with his parents. Therefore, he is forced to identify religious beliefs of his parents because it is the only alternative presented to him. The effect is more obvious when the child has a close relationship with his parents and he continues to live at home until he grows up as an adolescence.

The first world of a child is the home world. Since his parents are close to him, he must first identifies his parents religious beliefs and attitudes. He considers everything in his parents' beliefs as natural and therefore he should come to share the same religious beliefs.

It becomes obvious that much of the child's

(3) Geoffrey E.W.Scobie,Psychology of Religion,
(London: B.T. Batsford Ltd.,1975),p.53.

religious life is built up through imitation of parental beliefs and attitudes. This is due to the fact that he considers his parents as an authoritative power. Besides that, dependency may lead the child to identify roles and religious beliefs of his parents. Most children develop a pattern of dependency towards his parents and often has to be trained out of it until he becomes an adolescence. Therefore, he takes on naturally the roles and religious beliefs of his parents without any question. The result will be much greater in the child if the relationship between the child and the parents goes on very well. If the parents are religious, it is likely that the child will grow up in religious life. Religious belief is, therefore, bound together with his personality development so that he can grow up with that religion. It is evident, therefore, the religiosity of the child was a joint effect of the parental religiosity and identification with his parents.

If we look at a particular religion, Islam for instance, it regards a child's religious belief as the effect of socialization which he undergoes from childhood. It is believed that the most important

influence is that of his parental religious beliefs and attitudes. There is a "Tradition" (Al-Hadith) in Islam saying that a child is born with only instinctual abilities without any religious values of any kind. When he comes to the social world, he discovers first the world-view and the religious beliefs of his own parents. He does not regard that beliefs as another value because it is presented to him as part and parcel of the whole world-view. Therefore, he is likely to accept that beliefs to make them his own when he grows up. Smith (1974) comes to the same conclusion. He says,

" A child is non-religious at birth as he is non-moral, non-aesthetic, non-thinking. He inherits none of these qualities in a functional form but acquires them gradually through experience." (4)

Since the individual's first world is constructed in the early process of socialization, he must accept the religious beliefs of his parents as part of his world-view because his parents are the first social base of his identification. When he comes to enter a wider world, he discovers that other individuals

(4) R.J.Goldman, " Researchers in Religious Thinking," EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, Vol.6, No.2, (1964), pp.139-55.

(outside his parents) have the same religious beliefs. He begins to generalize that beliefs from his parents to the other individuals in general. Because of its characteristic that can be generalized to other individuals, the child accepts it as a reality. As the result, he begins to share it as part of his world-view as any other people do.

Interpersonal behaviour may help to transform religion from one individual to another. The individual always believes that the others are better socialized and he may take a lot of trouble to gain certain types of world-view as well as beliefs from his social groups. He seeks out the company of others in order to check his own beliefs especially when it is difficult for him to evaluate by himself. So, he will come to enter into a wider social interaction with his peer groups to gain that beliefs. If they continue to support or confirm his beliefs, it will be a part of the reality of the social world and every one is therefore expected to share the same religion. It grows up naturally when he undergoes the socialization process.

The process of socialization makes an individual realize that religious beliefs as any other values and meaning can be transmitted from one individual to another. He begins to learn that this belief can also be performed by others in the social world. So, it is considered as natural and common to anyone to grow up with this religion.

School is also important in contributing to the transformation or transmission of religious beliefs. An individual goes to school together with his fellow individuals and experiences the same world-view as well as its religion. In school, every one is directed towards a wider social interaction than at home. He is presented with the same values and meaning of the social world and religion is thus not excèpted. If school is considered as a formal place to acquire knowledge, the individual will grow up with its religion because it is also a part of social knowledge provided by the school social world. It is brought together with other social values and meaning as a part of life. The effect of school on the religious beliefs is stronger because children at this age are more receptive to the existing world-view which is

presented to them. There is no doubt that religion becomes a part of the world-view of an individual because it is introduced to them together with its world-view.

Language is also important because it may help the individual to accept religion as a natural part of his life. Through the medium of language he can identify the religious beliefs of other individuals and try to make them his own. Later, when he comes to a wider social world, he communicates with other individuals outside his family, he discovers that they also experience the same religious beliefs. Sometimes, he spends his spare times on reading and it also helps him to discover the existing values of religion which is written in the book. Therefore, through the medium of language he can understand religious beliefs of others either through his face to face communication or through his reading. It is always functional as the medium of understanding the religious beliefs in the social world to be a natural part of his life.

The mass-media such as newspapers, radio and television are all important contributions to the acceptance of religion as part of an individual's world-view. Every hour these media propagate the existing world-view to individuals where religion is a part of it. If religion as well as other world-views are continuously presented it is likely that the individual will accept it as a natural part of his life. He expects that every one shares the same world-view in which religion is included naturally. Therefore, there is no doubt that the individual will grow up with this religion because it seems natural to him to take on that religion as part of his life.

The state as an institutional structure of administration is regarded as a base for the individual to confirm his world-view. It constitutes laws and orders to all individuals so that every one must conform his activity within the boundry of these laws and orders. It also provides meaning, values and purposes of life by introducing various projects; economic, social, education and religion. They are all bound together and intro-

duced to the individuals as the basis of the world-view. When religion is introduced naturally in this way as any other values throughout the state, the individual will naturally grow up and accept it as part of his world-view.

In addition to these, culture is also a factor of how an individual enters a particular religion naturally as part of his world-view. The conformity to culture, especially during the period of childhood may help the individual to acquire religious beliefs together with other values and meaning because religious rituals are always associated with culture. We can see that the social training of the child directs him to translate tribal rituals into personal habit without any question. He regards the rituals as something that his group (his family or his peers) engages in, and learns that to perform the required act is to cement his identification with those who provide him security, affection and approval. Religious rituals for him become a natural part of culture, and he therefore accepts it naturally.

We have seen how an individual growing up in a social world comes to enter a particular religion in his own social world naturally as any other values and meaning as part of his world-view. The remaining discussion is on the contribution of religion to the construction of world-view and its maintainance.

Religion contributes to the construction of world-view in many ways. Firstly, it produces rules and orders to individuals in a social world. These are essential to any social world because they provide meaning to the individuals. Language for example needs certain rules or grammar so that it can be functional and meaningful whenever people employ it. As far as society is concerned, rules and orders are more meaningful if they are constituted by religion. Adultery for instance, is considered as illegal by the social order and it will be more meaningful if it is constituted by religion. Therefore, when religion comes to constitute the law of adultery, it will be considered as more meaningful. Religion, thus, comes to integrate the social orders and religious orders and as the result,

every social action implies that the individual meaning is directed towards religious orders. Later, it is integrated to others' action in order to produce a common meaning of the social world.

Religion also produces identity for individuals in a social world. Religious orders require individuals to act according to that orders so that the reality of the social world can be constructed. So, every one must keep the running of these orders in his social interaction. Separation from these orders (which are considered as meaningful) leads to the destruction of the individual meaning in life. He may lose the entire meaning of the social world and it will be followed by the loss of identity. Therefore, one must continue to perform his social interaction on the basis of these orders so that the identity can be sustained. So, by producing identity to individuals, religion may help to construct the world-view of this world.

Authority is another contribution of religion to the construction of a world-view. We have learnt that an individual always needs an authority

for the identification of roles and attitudes during the socialization process. Since the socialization process for an individual is never ended completely, he continuously depends on the plausibility of authority for the construction of world-view. He needs another type of authority when he has grown up to replace the authority of his father or his parents. Religion, thus comes to the social world introducing another authority to the individual and it is more reliable because it is always related to the sacred one. Later, every social interaction is referred to the authority of religion for the confirmation of its reality.

Ultimate reality is the most significant contribution of religion to the construction of world-view. We have seen that many of the individual experiences in the social world cannot be interpreted by the existing social orders alone. Although the individual in contemporary society interpretes the social world in the form of "scientific" propositions, the nature of the universe for instance is only interpreted by religious dimensions. Social orders can only constitute meaning to empirical phenomena in

the universe but it cannot go beyond this limit. Therefore, the sacred, that is a quality of mysterious and awesome power is only dealt by religion. Finally, the individual realized that religion is so important in the construction of the world-view because it provides an ultimately meaningful reality which cannot be interpreted by the ordinary socially constructed reality.

These are some of the major contributions of religion to the construction of world-view of a social world. It provides the most meaningful province of reality to the world construction of reality.

Besides that, the reality of the social world is not always stable. The fundamental processes of socialization and social control sometimes fail to ensure the maintaining of reality of the socially constructed world. The human facts of self-interest and stupidity make the socially constructed world uncertain. The institutional programmes are sabotaged by individuals themselves with conflicting interests. Therefore, it is suggested

that religion is another centrally important process that serves to support the maintainance of world-view of the social world.

Religion contributes to the maintainance of world-view in the way that it legitimates social orders. Berger says,

" Religion legitimates social institutions by bestowing upon them an ultimately valid ontological status, that is, by locating them with a sacred and cosmic frame of reference." (5)

Religion legitimates so effectively because it relates the uncertain reality construction of individuals with ultimate reality. The ultimate reality of the social world is now referred to the sacred reality which is beyond the limit of human meanings and human activity.

History shows us that the most ancient form of this legitimation is the conception of the institutional order as directly reflecting or manifesting the divine structure of the universe. It also indicates the necessity of the conception of the relationship between society and universe. Although this

(5) Peter L. Berger, The Social Reality of Religion, (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p.33.

type of legitimation seems to be present only in the primitive societies, it has now been transformed into the major civilizations of the world. For instance, in Israel there was a concept of the transcendent God of history. The idea finally leads to the interpretation of the social institutions in terms of revealed divine power. Consequently, Israel legitimated its institution in terms of the divinely revealed law throughout its existence as an autonomous society. Therefore, the people of Israel claim themselves as the chosen people of God on the earth. We have seen thus, the social institutions will maintain its reality if it is referred to the sacred, the ultimate reality. Therefore, it is well to stress that religion continued for many years to be the central legitimating agency. Religion serves to relate the humanly defined reality to ultimate, universal and sacred reality.

Besides that, religious legitimations (religious orders) are more stable, durable and firm in their reality. An individual may find that human rules and institutions are not always stable. The reality of human orders and institutions are always

threatened or sometimes sabotaged by the individuals themselves. For example, a person who commits murder may escape from death penalty during the trial if his defence council can prove that he is not guilty. On the other hand, religion promises its penalty for the murderer in the life-after although he may escape from such penalty in the present life. Therefore, religious legitimation is more stable, firm and durable because of its divine reference. The inadequacy of human orders needs religious orders in order to maintain its continuous reality in the social world.

Religious legitimation does provide an ultimate sense of righteousness to the individuals. If the rules and institutions are referred to God, an individual will be more confident about the role that he should perform in the social world. His roles and attitudes are now not only identified with other individuals (human) but also with the divine power. So, his self-identification with the roles becomes deeper and more stable.

In addition to that, religious legitimation has a comprehensive reality for the individual. On

the other hand, the reality of human orders in the social world is sometimes separated for a specific reason. In dreams for instance, the individual may experience another type of reality which is different from the reality of his awakesness. But the reality which is introduced by religion is always comprehensive in the sense that it continuously performs its reality. For example, the experience of death is considered as the final end of a reality for the socially constructed reality. But religion is able to relate death to its province of reality because religion interpretes death in its divine reality. Therefore, religion permits the individual to continue to exist in the social world with the continuous and comprehensive province of reality.

It has been found that religion provides a universal status to individuals in the social world. The status is conceived as part of the social stratification of that particular social world. For example, a King is considered as representing both the world of man and the world of God in the institution of social stratification of

the social world. The individual comes to regard his King as a divine power. It directs individuals to maintain this reality because it is conceived as the most real and meaningful one.

Another contribution of religion to the maintainance of reality is the process of "reminding" which is found in the religious law. For, religion is always associated with various types of ritual activities. The ritual, of course, must be repeatedly performed by the individual in order to obtain the meaningful truth of the religious law. Since the establishment of human rules and orders are sometimes sabotaged or probably forgotten, religious orders therefore direct the individual to the maintainance of its reality. Its continuous ritual performance reminds the individual about the reality of its orders. The individual has therefore no ground to lose his reality of the world because religion continuously performs its reality to support the reality of the social world.

Finally, the continuance of reality of religious legitimation depends upon the existence of

"base" which can guarantee the stability of its reality. In the maintainance of the social world for instance, the social base is essential so that the individual can get a continuous confirmation and recognition from other individuals for his reality maintainance. Similarly, religious reality, therefore, needs a "religious community" to be the base; such as the establishment of the Christian community, Muslim community and so forth. The base is thus considered as the plausibility structure which guarantees the continuance of its reality so that it can be maintained and transmitted to the next generation. Religion comes to the world with its ultimate reality provides a plausibility structure to support the maintainance of reality of its world-view. Since religion is considered as part of the world-view and it provides an ultimately meaningful reality, it contributes to support the reality maintainance of the social world.

Viewed from the above discussion, people come to enter a particular religion because they are socialized into it, they are not actually converted. The individual for example, growing up in a given

society accepts its world-view and religion is part of it. Can he maintain the stability of the world-view forever ? Possibly under certain circumstances, the stability of his world-view will be disturbed and sometimes broken down. When religion (which is part of world-view) no longer serves as the reality maintainance, he may transfer to another religion or, he may transfer to the whole secular world.

This transition becomes an interesting point to our social psychological study because there should be strong psychological reasons for his transition. In the next chapter we shall deal with the possibility of break down of the existing social world and its world-view leading to transition, i.e. religious conversion.

Chapter Six

CONVERSION: TO RELIGION

It has been found that the previous definitions of conversion are very inconclusive. Conversion is often only understood as a change of belief or sometimes it is understood as the return to God.⁽¹⁾ For example, James Strachan in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics says that conversion means the turning or rather the return of man to God.⁽²⁾ This is not a comprehensive meaning of conversion because it does not explain the actual processes of conversion. The turning of belief is not always followed by a transition from one world-view to another. One may

(1) We shall deal with various types of existing definitions of conversion in Chapter 9 of this dissertation. For the moment, it suffices to refer to a few of them because this chapter is intended to suggest another type of definition of conversion.

(2) James Strachan, "Conversion" ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS, edited by James Hastings, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1911), Vol.4, p.105.

turn his belief for instance, from one religion to another without changing his world-view. Besides that, this definition involves only one type of conversion that is, conversion to the religious. It is well to include another type of conversion that is, from the religious to the secular (which is called de-conversion). As a matter of fact, there is much evidence to show the possibility of de-conversion in the present society because everything seems to be secularized by the influence of modernization and secularization.

Probably, Berger's definition of conversion is a major contribution to the meaning of conversion in this study. He says that conversion is;

" individual 'transference' into another world" (3)

Although his definition is very general, it at least involves a transition from one world to another, rather than a change. Therefore, our definition of conversion should best be constructed on the light of his definition.

(3) Peter L. Berger, The Social Reality of Religion, (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p.50.

As far as religion is concerned, it is suggested that conversion means a transition or a leap from one world-view to another world-view as the result of instability or a break down of the existing one. It involves both the individual and the social.

It is well to divide the religious conversion into three major types. Firstly, conversion from the religious to the religious. This type includes the conversion from a primitive to a developed religion, from developed to another developed religion and from a less religious life to a more religious life. Secondly, conversion from the secular to the religious. And thirdly, conversion from the religious to the secular. The third type of conversion, that is, from the religious to the secular shall be discussed in the next chapter under the impact of secularization.

(1) Conversion: From the Religious to the Religious.

Very often, the instability of the existing world-view of a religion leads to the break

down of its reality. If the new alternative is presented, an individual is likely to transfer to the new one. Under this type of conversion, we can probably divide it into: (a) conversion from one primitive religion to a developed religion, (b) conversion from one developed religion to another developed religion and, (c) conversion from a less religious life to a more religious life.

(a) Conversion from a primitive to a developed religion.

Religious systems of primitive people are of various kinds, such as naturism, animism, totemism, fetishism and so forth. Emile Durkheim suggests that there should be two conditions for describing a religious system as primitive:

" in the first place, when it is found in a society whose organization is surpassed by no others in simplicity; and secondly, when it is possible to explain it without making use of any element borrowed from a previous religion. " (4)

Each of the above religious systems must at least possess these two conditions enabling us to dis-

(4) Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, first published 1915, second edition, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1976), p.1.

tinguish primitive religions from developed religions. It is not, however, the main purpose of this study to explore the nature of primitive religions in greater detail. The point should be made here that primitive people have their own world-view which defines reality for them.

We may take for example the aboriginal people in Malaysia as one example. There are thousands of Malaysian aborigines who have settled in many parts of the country. Most of them live in the jungle which is far away from the outside world. They have their own social world which is based upon primitive customs and beliefs. Their houses are made of wooden material and leaves. Hunting is the most common activity of primitive people because their everyday needs depend much upon hunting. Although they have no specific kind of religion, they always believe in the existence of a super-power of nature. Sometimes trees and stones are the objects of their worship. Very often, each tribe has its own object of worship and everyone in the tribe is subject to the holy object. But, whatever they believe in, at least they have been able to construct their own social

world and work together to maintain the stability of its world-view.

In the last few years, Malaysian government introduced its new policy aimed at improving the standard of living of aborigines. A large number of them have been evacuated to a new area of settlement. They were provided with better houses and land schemes so that they could start to live a new life. They were encouraged to send their children to the nearby schools: health services were also provided for them.

It has been found that their emigration from the life in jungle to the life in the new settlement has produced various types of crises for them. The movement has brought them into a wider social world which is different from their own. Subsequently, they must resocialize themselves so that they can live in accordance with the civilized people around them. They found that the way of life of civilized people became a challenge to their existing (primitive) world-view.

The challenge from the social world around them produced a psychological effect on their exis-

ting world-view. It led to the instability of the existing world-view because the way of life of civilized people implied a different world-view which they came to see as more attractive and more meaningful to them than their old one. The emigration not only involves physical, but also involves the beliefs, meaning, values and purposes in life. Although they entered the new social world, they could not forget completely the traditional custom and beliefs. Parts of these customs and beliefs were brought together with them to the new social world. Therefore, the emigration has produced a social crisis, that is, the crises of values, meaning, and purposes in life. Religious belief was also affected by this emigration. All these things led to the break down of the existing social structures as well as its religious beliefs. Sooner or later, they have to give up the traditional one and accepted the new customs and beliefs which were introduced by the new social world.

Besides that, the social prestige of civilized people around them, especially the officers who were directly involved in the new settlement

also introduced a challenge to them. Since most of the officers and the people around them are Muslims, they began to identify their religious belief with the social prestige as if there was a relationship between social status and religious belief. This identification has also led to the instability and probably the break down of their traditional belief.

There is evidence to show that they tried to resist the challenge although the new social world introduced different values and world-views. It has been found that they tried to reconstruct the traditional customs and beliefs when they came to enter the new social world. For example, they built other wooden houses behind the new houses because they believed that a child should be born in a wooden house. This is the evidence that the primitive people tried to reconstruct their own traditional customs and beliefs in the new social world. It must be difficult for them to change the primitive way of life because they have been socialized within that social world. When the new social world continued to introduce its meaning and values, they gradually became interested in

them and began to adopt attitudes and beliefs of civilized people around them to make them their own. At the same time, Islam introduced a world-view that is more compatible with the new social world. As the result, a large number of them have converted into Islam. They began to realize that a move to the new religion was more compatible with the world-view of the new social world.

We have, thus, seen that the conversion of these people was the result of the failure of their own world-view to maintain its reality when they entered the new social world. Islam, thus, was an attractive alternative for them because it has been able to provide another world-view for them. It is well to note that this is the example of conversion where the transition took place physically. We shall later be discussing the example of conversion where there is no such physical transition, that is, individuals remain in the same social world but the new challenge comes to attack the existing world-view.

The conversion of primitive people in East Africa provides another example of conversion from a primitive to a developed religion. Studies have shown that people in northern Mozambique converted into Islam as the result of change of social world. Islam provides them with a way of leaving their existing world-view. And we must begin our study by looking at the early background of their traditional social structure.

Before the coming of Islam, people in northern Mozambique already have constructed their own social structure. The establishment of the social and political institutions adjusted to their belief in the supreme deity, Yao. Religious rituals were always centred on the worship of ancestors or dead elders. The chief of the clan was the most powerful man and every one was subject to the decision of the chief. Very often, the chief of the clan was considered as the holy symbol of Yao. Therefore, a Yao chief had his traditional political and ritual authority over the individuals in the tribe. Psychologically, this authority contributes a significant factor to facilitate, encourage and perhaps to oblige

his subjects to convert to the new religion whenever the chief becomes a convert. The chief thus, is a ruler in the aspects of social structures as well as the religious rituals.

Besides that, there are several other factors in their conversion to Islam which might be interesting to our study. The tolerance of Islam towards the traditional religious system and rituals is one of the factors. Islam does not ask its new convert to give up completely their traditional religious rituals as long as the absoluteness of Allah remains undisputed. This is a special privilege given by Islam so that they can reshape or adjust the traditional rituals whenever they want to transfer to the new world-view. It is possible to suggest that Islam provides a way of leaving their existing world-view by introducing its tolerance and attractive world-view. There is no doubt that the coming of Islam has disturbed the stability of the existing world-view.

The concept of modernization which is brought by Islam is another factor of its attractive-

ness. Islam provides a way of improving and modernizing the structures of their social world because it is introduced by Muslim traders who are powerful in the economic sphere. Alpers draws the conclusion that;

" their move to Islam emphatically represents a step towards the modernization of their societies." (5)

Islam does not only introduce religion for them, but also introduces another form of world-view which is relevant to the process of modernization of their social structures.

The commercial relation between Arab traders and Yao chiefs is also the factor of their conversion. The Arab traders come not only for commercial business but also for the expansion of Islam. Their long commercial experience can be attractive to them because these people believe that Arab traders have a wider world-view since they have been travelling from one country to another. Therefore, their prestige, their experience

(5) Edward A. Alpers, " Towards a History of the Expansion of Islam in East Africa: The Matrilineal Peoples of the Southern Interior," in THE HISTORICAL STUDY OF AFRICAN RELIGION, edited by T.O.Ranger and I.N.Kimambo, (London: Heinemann, 1972), p.192.

in business and their world-view all accumulate the attractiveness of the new religion and its world-view.

The Muslim traders who came to northern Mozambique contributed to the attainment of a wider world-view among these people. Alpers for example, draws the conclusion that the spread of Islam in Southern Africa is mainly motivated by;

" the need for political and ritual legitimisation and the desire for the regularization of their economic ties with Zanzibar and the advantages offered to this end by the attainment of literacy in Arabic script." (6)

The coming of Islam offered various advantages to them, such as politic, rituals, economics and literacy. For example, the attainment of literacy has of course widened their knowledge about the outside world. Therefore, Islam provides them with various advantages which are more meaningful and attractive.

Another factor of the conversion to Islam is the integration of the African and Islamic social and religious institutions. For example, the autho-

(6) Ibid., p.192.

rity of the Yao chiefs is maintained by Islam although people converted into it. Many of the traditional ceremonies can still be carried out when they move to the new social world. Some of these ceremonies have been mentioned by Alpers in his study. He says,

" the Islamisation of funeral ceremonies constituted an important means of personally expressing one's adherence to Islam." (7)

The legitimating power of Islam is one of the contributions to the conversion of people and the expansion of Islam in general.

All these factors reveal that Islam is attractive to them. It provides a wider world-view and a broader social contact with the outside world. Therefore, a large number of them converted into Islam in the last century.

These are some of the examples of conversion from a primitive to a developed religion. However, the difference should be made clear between the first and the second example although

(7) Ibid., p.194.

both are the examples of transition from primitive to developed religion. The first example shows that the conversion takes place because the individual leaves the primitive social world physically by moving to the new settlement (new social world). On the contrary, the second example shows that the individual does not move physically, instead he gives up the traditional world-view and accepts the new world-view which is introduced by Islam. Both of these examples however, involve a transition from one world-view to another.

(b) Conversion from a developed to another developed religion.

This is a very unusual type of conversion because very few people convert from one developed religion to another developed religion. There are, however, several possibilities which may produce this type of conversion and here we can but choose a few of them.

Firstly, there is a high possibility that inter-marriage in a multi-racial country may produce a conversion from one developed religion to another.

For example, Malaysia has three major races; they are Malays, Chinese and Indians. Each of these races has different religious beliefs. In general, we can say that Malays are Muslims, Chinese are Christians (although some of them believe in Confucianism) and Indians believe in Hinduism.

The social structure in the country contributes to the possibility of inter-marriage among races. Inter-marriage does not only affect culture, but also affects religion. For example, a Malay boy may fall in love with a Chinese girl and decide to get married. Normally, the girl must have converted into Islam before she can get married to the Muslim boy. Therefore, she leaves Christianity and converts into Islam.

Although the conversion of the girl is motivated by her love and her wish to marry the Muslim boy, it may not be the sole factor of her conversion. She may have learnt that Islam could provide another world-view : the boy may have told her that she will obtain another meaning in life, if she leaves the existing religion. This may also be a motive for her conversion. Further, her identification with

the boy may lead her to wish to share his belief. His world may seem more real to her than her own. All these experiences may cause instability in her existing world-view and make her willing to transfer to the new one. Her transition from Christianity to Islam is, thus, one of the examples of conversion from one developed religion to another.

Secondly, dissatisfaction about the existing world-view may also lead an individual to conversion of this type. Dissatisfaction may arise for various reasons, such as the failure of one religion to provide answers or solutions to the great questions of life. For example, the rapid change of the present social world produces various questions of life for a particular religious believer. If the existing religion cannot provide satisfactory answers, the believer is likely to look for another religion.

Although there are very few people converted in this way, there is evidence to show that it is one of the possibilities of conversion

from one religion to another. One of the examples of this kind is that of MARYAAM JAMEELAH (formerly known as MARGARET MARCUS). She converted from Christianity into Islam. Very little is known about her previous religious experiences. However, it has been found that her deep thought and study led her to convert to Islam in 1961. It is reported that her dissatisfaction with some of the solutions in Christianity led her to study other answers and solutions provided by Islam. For many years she had been experiencing dissatisfaction until finally she came to the conclusion that Islam provides the best solutions for her questions of life. Therefore, she left Christianity and converted into Islam.

What is interesting is that, she did not only transfer from one world-view to another culturally, but also moved physically - from America to Pakistan. Probably, her physical transition to Pakistan was a great advantage to her so that she could enter the social world of Islam within the Islamic environment where Islam is being widely practiced. It is evident that her emigration to Pakistan was important in enabling her to successfully maintain the new world-view of Islam.

Another example of conversion from one developed religion to another developed religion is the conversion experience of St. Paul. (8) It is reported that Paul was an orthodox and zealous Jew. He was in bitter opposition to Christians because he had the authority from the high priest to arrest the Christians in Damascus. On the way to Damascus, he saw the light and became blind for a few days. Jesus came to him through his vision and asking him to give up his persecutions. He suddenly repented and converted into Christianity and recovered his sight. From that moment, he started preaching in the synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God.

The story of his conversion indicates that there is a leap from one world-view to another. Although his conversion experience seems to be a sudden transition, the fact is that the idea of Christianity had already been in his mind long before the actual conversion took place. He tried to resist the challenge from Christianity by intensifying the oppo-

(8) ACTS, 9:1 - 27.

sition. Possibly, the fear of moving to Christianity, the uncertainty of the reality of the Christianity and his loyalty to the existing world-view of the Jews all made him reluctant to move. He tried to maintain the existing one and therefore he intensified the persecution.

On the other hand, Christianity continued to raise more and more questions until he realized that Judaism was not adequate to solve these questions. The inadequacies of Judaism produced a conflict in his mind and finally led to the break down of the existing world-view. Therefore, he had to transfer to the new world-view by reconstructing and reshaping Christianity to what he was converted in order to fulfill the inadequacies of Judaism. Christianity was seen to have provided him with answers and solutions which could not be solved by Judaism.

The change of name from Saul to Paul is an interesting point for the psychological study of his conversion. Probably, the fear of loss of identity made him reluctant to move to the new alternative. If he moved, the existing identity may have gone.

For that reason, he changed his name to Paul after his conversion had taken place. The new name could constitute a new identity for him so that he would be more confident of the reality of the new social world. (a more detail treatment of his conversion will be given in Chapter Eight).

(c) Conversion from a less religious life to a more religious life.

We must now consider the possibility of an individual's conversion from a slight religious involvement to a more active religious involvement. An individual who has been socialized into a particular religion of his social world accepts religion naturally as part of his world-view. But sometimes he looks at the religion deeper than others. Various factors may lead him to consider religion as the highest source of meaning in life. If he considers this, he will be more religious as he goes to take on that religion.

"New experience which is acquired through further reading can lead a marginally religious man

to become more religious. The individual may have an opportunity to read several books on the importance and the contribution of religion to the formation of a society for instance. The book may tell him various ways of maintaining the stability of human character and behaviour and how religion constitutes a special rule for the stability of human conducts. His reading therefore, provides him with new experiences and deeper understanding of the usefulness of religion. He may view the roles of religion in a wider context and its relations to the social world. These experiences may lead him to up-grade his religious involvement and he thus becomes more religious.

It is also possible that the question of death may lead a marginally religious man to become more religious. The problem of death affects the individual who has a slight religious involvement in a rather different way from that of a secular man (we shall examine how the question of death leads an individual from the secular to the religious later in this chapter.) It has been found that the problem of death leads an individual

to become more religious if he already is marginally religious. He may believe that death is not the final end of all human beings, but there is an eternal life hereafter. In order to get a better life in the hereafter, he wants death to be delayed so that he can improve himself before experiencing it. This is due to the fact that most religions do not consider death as the final end for a man. For example, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism all consider death in similar way, that is, it is not the final end for human beings. This aspect of faith may lead a marginally religious individual to a more active in his religious involvement.

" Fear of death may lead one to a religious commitment, and depending on the orientation of one's religion, it may or may not allay the fear." (9)

Whatever it is, the question of death may lead an individual to become more religious.

We have seen three possible stages of conversion which all come under the conversion from the religious to the religious.

(9) Richard D. Kahoe and Rebecca Fox Dunn, " The Fear of Death and Religious Attitude and Behaviour," JOURNAL FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF RELIGION, Vol.14, No.4, (December 1975), p.380.

(2) Conversion: From the Secular (non-religious) to
the Religious

A social world is said to be secular if significant sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious thinking and institutions. If this is the case, it certainly produces an individual whose world-view is secular too. This movement is not irreversible and there still exists its possibility of conversion from the secular to the religious. This may be due for example to the fact that the secular world is sometimes unable to provide answers to the individual's specific problems. We shall now examine some of the possible factors leading to such conversion, that is, the conversion from the secular to the religious.

Firstly, the rapid change of the modern civilization is one of the factors leading to the individual conversion from the secular to the religious. Society is not static but developing and in its development it may produce more and more problems. Although a fully socialized society is

able to construct its own province of meaning, values as well as its world-views, these do not remain stable forever. For example, a man in the 15th. century viewed the world differently from a man who lives in the present century. And our interpretation of the values, meaning and life style now will not be suitable for the next generation because the social world itself is developing. We can see for instance, women are being emancipated, and children are being educated. Modern cities are being built. The individual is becoming predominantly a city dweller. In a large city, an individual has to adjust himself to the new civilization. Everything around the city-dweller has been man-made and even children have been planned. So all these changes show that society is always developing, it is not static. The rapid change of the modern world affects the existing reality of the social world. It produces new challenges to the individual and it disturbs the continuance of reality of the existing world-view. It appears as if the existing world-view is not appropriate to the existing social world. Therefore, it is possible for the individual to transfer to religion in order to obtain a new world-view because the existing one has broken down.

In addition to that, these changes have raised many questions for the individual. The existing world-view is inadequate in providing solutions for these problems. As the result of this inadequacy, the individual needs other solutions. Subsequently, the existence of religion as a new alternative may be decisive.

The second factor that leads to the conversion from the secular to the religious is the problem of death. Death is a common problem for all individuals in the socially constructed world. It has been found that the problem of death may motivate one's basic religious commitment. A secular man for instance, may witness the death of others and begin to realize that death is something to be faced individually and inevitably. He then anticipates his own death and becomes anxious about it. Death, therefore, presents a secular individual with a formidable problem such as meaning of life because it is an obvious threat to the continuity of human relationships. Since the existing world-view does not provide sufficient answers for this problem, he may turn to religious tradition in order to obtain an answer. The individual therefore may transfer from the secular world to the religious world-view because only religion deals satisfactorily with the

problem of death.

Death also leads an individual to the crisis of meaning, values and life style of the social world. The reality of the existing world-view will be interrupted by the death of someone important to the individual. Supposing a man loses his wife and becomes restless because her death makes him uncertain about the meaning of life. He does not know what to do in face of this problem. It seems that his world can no longer maintain its meaning and value. Therefore, he moves to the province of religion in order to obtain a new meaning in life.

Another way in which death leads an individual to religion is the question of life beyond the death (life after death) . It is evident that the existing world-view does not deal at all with the problem of life beyond death, especially the question of immortality. An individual may raise various questions about the nature of life after death, especially when he comes to witness the death of others and becomes curious to know what happens to them after death: will the soul live again or not. Argyle claims that belief

in immortality is a product of the fear of death. (10)
So, religion serves to provide answers to the question of immortality because the existing world-view does not deal with such a metaphysical problem.

The third factor is the aesthetic value. Sometimes an individual comes to be interested in religion because of his own experience. He may appreciate the beautiful arts of the architectural buildings, music, painting and the beauty of nature. Although people consider all these things as natural, for someone there must be a special meaning or value to his life. The beauty of nature for example, provides a special meaning beyond its ordinary interpretation. This experience leads him to realize that the existing world-view does not deal with such aesthetic values. Therefore, he comes to religion in order to fulfill this inadequacy. We must take for example a man's experience of nature,

(10) Michael Argyle, Religious Behaviour, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), p.153.

" I was living in a small town in one of the southern counties of England, and one Sunday afternoon I went out into the country for a stroll. It was summer, and after walking for a few miles I lay down on the side of a hill. I saw, stretching to the distant horizon, meadows and orchards and cornfields; the cloudless skies were gloriously blue, and the sun was flooding earth and heaven with splendour. The wonderful beauty filled me with excitement and delight. And then suddenly, through all that I saw, there came the very glory of God. I knew that He was there. His presence, His power, and His goodness took possession of me and held me for hours."(11)

It is evident that this kind of experience may lead the individual to religion because the ordinary levels of meaning cannot provide for its significance to this experience.

The intellectual experience is the fourth factor of conversion from the secular to the religious. Very often the secular world regard the universe as merely a product of the law of nature. The world exists because it exists. But sometimes, an individual goes beyond this, and he may ask himself about the creation of the universe. How did

(11) Quoted from: Robert H. Thouless, An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion, first published 1971, (London: Cambridge University Press, reprinted 1974), p.33.

it come to exist ? Who created this universe ? What is the final end of this universe ? All these questions lead him to realize that the existing world-view does not provide adequate answers for him.

Another example of the intellectual experience is that of logic. A mathematician for instance, may come to the conclusion that the limit of mathematics is inadequate to calculate the complexity of creation of this universe. The ability of logic which is implied by mathematics is limited to certain degrees. At the final analysis, he may find its inadequacies and he therefore come to religion for its solution. The ability of religion in providing solution to both physical and metaphysical problems becomes attractive to him and leads him to come to religion.

The fifth factor is the moral experience of an individual. The moral order imposed by society in the existing social world is sometimes inadequate. It is frequently sabotaged by human interests. Absolute justice is apart from law because every one tends to act freely without considering the significance of absolute justice. For example, a real murderer may be set free by the judge because the existing law

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departs from absolute justice. This example shows that there is no real justice in the present moral order. The individual who realizes its inadequacies may be dissatisfied with the existing moral order. This experience produces a conflict in his mind and he begins to doubt the reality of the existing world-view. On the other hand, religion provides another promise of punishment for the murderer in the life after. Its reality refers to the absoluteness of a super power who promises this punishment. It is possible that the individual who feels the inadequacy of this law and its world-view may turn to religion so that he can fill up this inadequacy.

The practice of the confession of sins before other persons (such as priests) is another indication of the inadequacy of the existing moral orders. Thouless suggests that this practice is one of the ways in which an individual can resolve his moral conflict.⁽¹²⁾ The psychological effect of confession is of great importance because the individual can face his darker side by confession of his wrong-

(12) Ibid., p.45.

doings and get the absolute assurance of forgiveness from the priests. Since the existing world-view does not provide the absolute assurance of forgiveness, the individual has to move to religion.

These are some of the possible factors leading to conversion. We have suggested various possibilities of migration which serve to explain the variety of religious conversion. It includes a wide range of transition from one world-view to another. It is believed that these factors serve to disturb the stability of the existing world-view and introduce the attractiveness of religion. So, the transition from one world-view to another as the result of this instability is understood as conversion. The previous examples help to explain the meaning of conversion. In the next chapter we shall deal with an opposite direction of conversion that is, de-conversion.

Chapter Seven

DE-CONVERSION: FROM THE RELIGIOUS TO THE SECULAR

By de-conversion we mean, an individual's transition from one world-view (religious) to another world-view (secular), as the result of the break down of religious values, meaning and purpose of the individual in his social world. The transition is therefore accompanied by certain changes in beliefs, attitudes and behaviour.

De-conversion becomes the most significant form of conversion in a society in which individuals are moving from religious content and control in their lives. The most important factor in de-conversion is the influence of secularization.

This chapter is therefore, intended to show how secularization can produce de-conversion. However, it is well to remember that under the impact

of secularization religion does not entirely disappear. Secularization affects some societies more than others. The great majority of people still do participate in religious ceremonies. Christianity, Islam Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaisam all continue to command great popular respect and continue to expand in many parts of the world. But the "influence" of these religions (perhaps all religions of any kind) has been disturbed and halted by the advance of secularization. The process of modernization and industrialization are the common mediators or vehichles of secularization, challenging the place of religion in society. In other words, the reality of religion as well as the role of religion in the present industrial society has been gradually affected or even negated by secularization.

Even where time is given to religious worship and teaching, the mass-media, the school, social interaction and activities may counteract the influence of religion. The thinking and attitude of people are influenced by secularization however obscurely and slowly. All over the modern world, the meaning of the traditional faith in the super-natural God or gods seem to be diminishing or becoming confused. Many

modern people now take the values of modernization and industrialization as the norm for life and judge themselves and others basically by their ability to take part in the progress to secular knowledge and secular prosperity.

However, in our attempt to deal with the secularization, it is well to avoid any confusion that may arise between "irreligion" and "secularization". The irreligious and the secular are not synonymous. Sometimes, in dealing with secularization we may find that a discussion of the rise of irreligion as a social phenomenon is also relevant, but it is not directly equatable. For, in general the secular is a broader term than the irreligious itself.

Before we proceed to show how secularization can produce de-conversion, we shall investigate further the meaning of secularization. Peter L. Berger says that secularization is,

" the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols." (1)

(1) Peter L. Berger, The Social Reality of Religion, (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p.107.

Modern western history shows that there is a tendency towards the separation of church and state, especially in western Christian countries. It seems that everywhere in modern western countries religion has only a small part to play in society. It has lost its reality when people do not consider religion to be an important institution in their life. Modern western countries, under the influence of secularization, have preferred to concentrate not on unseen powers but on human empirical discoveries.

The individual in the modern secular world has been culturally influenced by the secularization. All forms of his social world activities have been motivated by this dominant power, or as Wilson says, secularization is,

" the process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance." (2)

In another section of the same book he also says that a secular society is one where,

" the sense of the sacred, the sense of the sanctity of life, and deep religiosity are.... absent." (3)

(2) Bryan Wilson, Religion in Secular Society,
(London: Watts, 1966), p.14.

(3) Ibid., p.112.

Therefore, the social world activities of the individual tend to be entirely independent and free from the dominance of religious institutions. In another book Wilson says,

" Religion, particularly in its traditional form, has become socially less and less significant. Most modern men, for most of their time, in most of their activities, are very little touched - if they are touched at all - by any direct religious intimations. " (4)

In social interaction with others the individual does not consider religion as a necessary institution. He runs his life without religious significance of any kind. It seems that religion has no connection at all with the everyday world.

On the basis of this discussion, we can construct our own definition of secularization. It is the social, economic and political movement by which ideas, institutions and phenomena pass from religious interpretation and control. For example, education, health and welfare are all now constituted by secular considerations. Working for the well-

(4) Bryan Wilson, Contemporary Transformations of Religion, first published 1976, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p.6.

being of society may now be a purely secular activity. A secular world-view does not relate such matters to belief in God or a future life. In general, secularization has replaced the religious meaning, value and purpose of the social world. It varies from one individual to the next but its effect is generally felt throughout society.

Having discussed the general meaning of the secularization and the place of religion in the secular world, we now come to show how secularization may produce de-conversion. This is the effect of secularization on religion.

Firstly, as the result of secularization, religion is restricted only to the construction of sub-worlds. Human history shows that the existence of religion in the social world in the past emerged with its classical tasks of constructing a common social world and general world-view. Gradually, religion has been overtaken by the influence of secularization and is only restricted to the construction of certain sub-worlds of individuals or groups. An individual may locate religion in the private sphere of the every

day life. This may be seen in relation to the life of a family where, although religion can no longer fulfill its classical tasks of constructing a common social world, the institution of within family life an individual may continue to adopt certain attitudes and characteristic of religious life. A business man for example may participate in two types of reality. At home, he may faithfully adhere to the religiously legitimated norms of family life. But when he is at work he enters another province of meaning, which is secular. He has to conduct his activities in the business world and the public sphere without any reference to religious values of any kind. This phenomenon is very common in the present secular society where the individual is unable to integrate the two provinces of meaning. The secular world may invade the family world and destroy its reality. This leads the individual to a complete transference to the secular world since the religious world cannot maintain its reality.

The modern social world offers a constant challenge to religious institutions and traditions. The structure of monopolistic power possessed by religious groups and traditions has broken down with the develop-

ment of secular society. We have seen that religion in previous centuries was the most powerful single agency constructing the common social world of the people and it was taken for granted in everyday life. When society became secular and the individual tended to be secularized in his social world activities then the situation has changed entirely and we can see now religious institutions which have lost their monopolistic power and subsequently become comparable to marketing agencies and religious traditions become consumer commodities. Religious traditions have to be introduced in the most attractive form as commodities through religious institutions so that more consumers will come to buy religious commodities. These are the characteristics that religious traditions and religious institutions have in the present secular society.

The example indicates that religion must now exist within the secular world. Although religion was a monopolistic power when it was dominant, the existence of secularization has then placed religion in the province of its sub-worlds. Viewed from its position as one of the sub-worlds, the

effect of secularization varies from some people to others. It does for some people and not for others for various reasons. Firstly, socialization within a religious family or group may lead them to resistance. They are likely to become religious because they have been socialized into it. Secondly, people can come to religion as a consumer choice. It is modified to exist within the secular social world. This hardly deserves to be called conversion because religion is still partly employed in the private sphere of their everyday life.

Religion can be marketed attractively if it can reflect or satisfy the needs of consumer preference, but not so as to challenge the secular world-view. On the other hand, secular world-view has taken over the individual's preference and bitterly challenged the reality of religion. It may be seen now as less important because it has failed to satisfy the needs of individuals in face of the problem of the secular world. It is possible for the individual to leave the province of religious market and enter the province of secularization. Subsequently, the individual's preference

changes from the religious commodity to the secular commodities. The transition from the province of religious market to the province of secularization is not only a change in the individual's preference, but also accompanied by a transition of the individual himself to the secular market (that is the modern secular world). People no longer deal with the religious province of meaning as they enter the province of the secular world because the failure of religion in the fulfillment of their needs in face of the secular world-view leads them to doubt its reality.

As the result of this failure, it leads to the break down of the reality of religion (the religious province of meaning), until finally, it loses reality. The attractiveness of the province of the secular world convinces people that this world is more real will satisfy their needs. In order to enter the new province of reality, they have to transfer from the religious world to the province of the secular world. The movement thus, represents a transition from one world-view to another and it is a form of conversion, in its case

de-conversion from religion, but it is structurally a conversion.

Another way that religion is restricted to the construction of sub-worlds can be referred to the nature of the Christian church itself due to its institutional specialization. The concentration of religious activities and symbols on one institutional specialization thus defines the rest of the social world as secular, having no religious significance. It is probably one of the main factors in the decline in religion which leads to the individual's transference to another world which is secular in its reality, meaning and value. One important aspect of this is the practice of separating church and state.

The study has shown that the transition takes place when the reality of the religious world has broken down. At the beginning, the individual might try to resist the challenge of secularization and try to maintain the reality of the religious province of meaning. But, as the impact of secularization is so strong and powerful, he can no longer maintain that province of reality. So, it is possible

for him to be converted to the new province of meaning, which is called in this case de-conversion.

The second cause of secularization leading to de-conversion is the rise of science as an autonomous influence in the modern industrial society. Most people in the western secular countries and probably in most parts of the world have become more interested in the empirical understanding of nature rather than metaphysical speculation. The structure of the modern industrial society requires the presence of a large number of trained or skilled individuals in the fields of science and technology. They are the people who have the required capability to run the state.

Religion, because of its metaphysical nature and phenomena has become only a symbol of a family rather than a dominant power in society as it was before. Probably the function of science itself makes people alienated from the dominance of religion. Science can answer the questions what religion cannot, concerning how to produce things and solve problems. People find that science can

produce sophisticated technological developments for the sake of society's daily needs. It can contribute various interesting discoveries to the modern way of life to suit the secular world. Science can help people to produce better food, better bread, better wines in order to fulfill the individual's needs. Above all, science can produce whatever people need. Modern industrial people are more dependent upon the ability of science in the fulfillment of their everyday needs. All these things contribute to the attraction of science rather than religion. Therefore, the transference of individuals from the reality of religion to the reality of science is structurally a conversion and in this case it is a de-conversion.

The third effect of secularization leading to de-conversion is the secularization of individuals' consciousness. Because of the rise of science as an autonomous power, the individual's training, orientation and ongoing social organization are based on a high degree of rationalization without any reference to the religious significance. This process leads to the secularization of consciousness among the individuals in the modern industrial society. As a result,

individuals look at the world and their lives without any religious values of any kind. This is also a form of conversion, that is de-conversion to the secular world.

The fourth effect of secularization is the crisis of credibility in religion. Since the individual is very much exposed to the secular ideas in the secular world activities, he begins to be uncertain about the reality of religious traditions. Berger for instance gives a strong emphasis to the crisis of credibility, he says,

" secularization has resulted in a widespread collapse of the plausibility of traditional religious definitions of reality." (5)

It introduces the individual to a wider variety of challenges such as religious and other reality-defining agencies that compete for his allegiance. The crisis will be more obvious if the individual has previously been trained in a religious institution. If he goes out to the social world, he may get a job in the public sector or, he may run a business. There-

(5) Peter L. Berger, op. cit.; p.126.

fore, his role in the social world is totally different from his previous religious orientation. He discovers that the reality of the secular world does not confirm the reality of his religion. This may lead to the crisis of credibility in the existing reality of religion in his mind. The loss of credibility in his religion may lead him to transfer from religion to the whole secular world. Therefore, his transition from a religious world-view to the secular world-view is a form of conversion. In this case, it is called de-conversion from religion, but it is structurally a conversion.

The fifth factor of de-conversion is the politic as an ideology. Politics play an important part in the social world activities of individuals. With the rise of secularization there is a tendency towards the secularization of the political order that goes naturally with the development of modern industrialization. Politic as an ideology in a social world introduces another set of meaning to individuals and it competes with religion. Later, we can find that there is a tendency towards the institutional separation between state and religion because politic continues to introduce the reality of its ideology. The tendency seems to be in all

cases the emergence of a state emancipated from the sway of religious institutions. As a result, politics as an ideology becomes interesting to individuals and therefore religion has no part in the state administration. This situation may produce more and more secular individuals especially politicians, and religion becomes less important in the social world activities. It is therefore possible to be converted to a political ideology if it is presented as a secular world-view competing with religion.

Another way in which ideology may compete with religion is if capitalism and socialism are regarded as ideologies. The two systems that is, capitalism and socialism are considered as secular if they are merely regarded as economic orders which lie outside religious control. But if they are regarded as one of the aspects of an ideology, then they will compete with religion. Both ideology and religion now introduce different sets of meaning. It is possible for an individual to be converted to an ideology (which now consists of capitalism and socialism) if it is presented as a secular world-

view competing with religion. Secularization has thus produced a liberated secular territory for individuals because they have to move away from the religious territory. So, the transition of individuals from the religious to the political ideology is structurally a form of conversion, and in its case is called de-conversion.

The sixth effect of secularization leading to de-conversion is the loss of faith in religious values. The modern western history shows that the decline of religion in the West was partly caused by the failure of modern western Christianity in the industrial revolution. The defeat of religion (particularly the modern Christianity) was more evident in England, the world's first industrial country. From that time, religion has gradually lost its popularity and even its power in the society.

We have seen that society was mobile or developing, but the social philosophy implied by the official religion was not. Here was the basic defeat of religion, its values and meaning have been replaced by secularization. The working class in its daily need for

example, might accept charity or patronage or education from religious bodies, but it would not take doctrines from them and it would not give them its heart. We have seen therefore individuals have lost their faith in the religious values and moved to the reality of the secular world.

In America in particular, theological thinking itself has at times been affected by secularization. Certain beliefs become problematic because of the acceptance of the secular world-view. A good example is WILLIAM HAMILTON who describes the situation in which he finds himself.

" What does it mean to say that the theologian in America is a man without faith ? Is he therefore a man without God ? It would seem to follow. He has his doctrine of God, several of them no doubt, and all correct. But that is surely not the point. He really doesn't believe in God, or that there is a God, or that God exists. It is not that he is fashionably against idols or opposed to God as a Being or as part of the world. It is God himself he has trouble with." (6)

Some theologians who were previously active in church work, preaching, speaking to church and college groups, but now when the secular and the religious worlds disagree, they find themselves taking the side of the secular.

(6) William Hamilton, Radical Theology and the Death of God, (Penguin Books, 1968), p.96.

This is an example of the tendency to transition from the province of religious reality to the province of the secular world. Although the transition is not yet complete, the reality of their religious province of meaning has begun to break down gradually. They are not longer interested in ecclesiastical questions or in the role of the church in the modern industrial world. The Bible has become a strange book from an alien social world. Gradually they come to share the hopes and fears of the secular world.

Their attitude towards faith indicates that they can no longer maintain the reality of the religious world. The existence of the new secular reality makes it possible to transfer from the existing reality to the reality of the secular world. the transition from a religious to a secular world-view is structurally a form of conversion, but in this case, it is de-conversion.

Having discussed some of the effects of secularization leading to de-conversion, we can say that it is possible to be de-converted from the reli-

gious to the secular. We have mentioned some of the possible factors leading to de-conversion. It is the most striking form of conversion in the present secular society in many parts of the world. In the next chapter, we shall come to examine some of the classical examples of religious conversion in world's great religions.

Chapter Eight

CONVERSION IN WORLD RELIGIONS

In this chapter we shall examine examples of religious conversion from each of the great religions of the world in the light of the model of migration or transition which has been constructed in Chapter Three.

Religious conversion is not a new phenomenon but has been a constant aspect of religious experience. However, the meaning of conversion has often been restricted to a particular religion or sometimes to a particular form of experience only. Therefore, it is felt necessary in this study to investigate examples from each great religions to examine the place given to the conversion in theme and its interpretation.

(a) Conversion in Hinduism

Unlike Buddhism, Hinduism has no historical founder. It is a complex national religion of many different strands. The Rig Veda is the Holy Scriptures of Hinduism. The Vedas are believed by Hindus to have been revealed by the gods to the ancient seers. It is said that to be a Hindu, one must be born into a caste and accept the Vedas.

Hindu society has been divided into four major traditional castes, though there are many minor sub-castes. The castes are first the Brahmins or priests. Next comes the ruler-warrior castes (Kshatriya). Then, comes the merchant caste (Vaishya). These three upper castes are "twice born", meaning that they are born again by initiation in adolescence, and they wear a sacred thread diagonally from shoulder to waist. The fourth caste is the servile class (Shudra).

We are more interested in the concept of twice born in Hindu theology. The concept provides a basic understanding for our attempt to study con-

version in Hinduism. The concept itself indicates a tendency of transition from one state of religious life to another. Hindu Scriptures had unconsciously established the existence of two different provinces of meaning or reality in its attempt to obtain the highest level of religious life. Viewed from the model of transition, we may say that the life of three upper castes before they are reborn (before adolescence) has one reality and another reality will be found in the life after adolescence (after they are reborn).

The teaching of Hinduism, especially the concept of rebirth will be very useful in our attempt to study the conversion experience of Hindus. The Upanishads for instance, teach the transmigration (Samsara) of the soul from one life on earth to another through rebirth. There is another moral teaching which is called "Karma". Karma means "deeds" or the fruits of one's actions, it is the law of the cause and effect, or rewards and punishments. A good or bad rebirth depends on one's previous action;

" Those whose conduct on earth has given pleasure, can hope to enter a pleasant womb, that is, the womb of a Brahman, or a woman of the princely class, or a woman of the peasant class; but those whose conduct on earth has been foul can expect to enter a foul and stinking womb, that is, the womb of a bitch or a pig or an outcaste." (1)

Rebirth is compared to a caterpillar passing from one leaf to another, as the soul passes to another earthly life, or to a snake shedding its skin. The proof of it is taken to be the indestructible nature of the soul, which is eternal and cannot die.

There are numerous examples of conversion which can be found in Hinduism. We may take for example the conversion of Namdev who is said to have been a converted dacoit.

" On one occasion when Namdev went to behold his god in the temple he was not allowed to enter because a Brahman, who had brought cooked food to offer to the god, would not suffer persons of Namdev's degraded caste to stand under the same roof with him. Namdev while detained outside the temple, saw approach a very needy low-caste woman with a child on her hip. The child was crying pitifully for a morsel of the food brought by wealthy persons as offerings to the gods. The mother tried to restrain the child's cries and longings. The child refused to be comforted and only cried and coveted the more. The woman then began to beat the child. Namdev's heart melted at the sight, and he remonstrated with the mother for her behaviour. She replied; 'The child is hungry and wishes me to give her the god's food, which is impossible.

(1) R.C.Zaehner, Hindu Scriptures, Translation,

(London: J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd., 1978), p.101.

I have nothing myself, I am totally without means. My husband was one of the eighty-four horsemen recently cut down by the inhuman dacoits. Being thus helpless myself, what can I give the child? I only possess the bones in my body. Dost thou, by the chiding and harsh words, desire me to feed her with him ?'

Her words pierced Namdev's heart, and he began to reflect how many families had been ruined by his reckless and lawless career. On leaving the temple precincts, he bestowed his mare and whatever clothes he could dispense with on the Brahman, and, to use his own words, made a friend of repentance."

(2)

It is reported that his previous life was wicked and sinful. When he went to the temple and met the woman and her hungry child asking for food, he began to realize the real life of the world. He gave everything that belonged to him and gave up his wicked way of life. The story which was told by the woman made him realize that his previous way of life and his wickedness was not really meaningful. Then, he decided to give up that province of reality by entering the way of Brahmans. He consequently repented himself for what he had done and finally became a religious man.

The example shows that there was a transition

(2) Max Arthur Macauliffe, The Sikh Religion: its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), Vol.vi, pp.21-22.

from one province of reality to the new province of reality in his experience. His existing province of reality began to break down when he was confronted with the problems of poverty faced by low-caste people (especially the woman and her child). He felt sinful for his previous reckless and lawless career. If he continued to maintain that reality, many more low-caste people would certainly suffer for his wrongdoings. The feeling of the sense of guilty led to the break down of his existing province of reality. Since he did not want to see any more people suffered from his unlawful and reckless career, he should therefore give up that career entirely. That historical moment made him fully realize that he should not maintain that reality. The only alternative he had was to transfer to the religious province of reality. Subsequently, he transferred to the new province of reality (through his repentance). His transition therefore, is one of the conversion experiences in Hinduism.

Another example of conversion experience in Hinduism was of Tukaram (1608 - 1649). He was a shopkeeper, and the story of his conversion expe-

rience is a typical story of the poignant sorrows of Indian life. A succession of disasters fell on his business and home.

First, death took both his parents and his eldest brother's wife. Then his brother left home forever to become a "Sannyasi". After that his business failed and he became bankrupt. The climax came in the famine of 1630, when he lost his eldest son and his favourite wife died, crying for bread. Stunned with grief, he sat for seven days with his eyelids closed. He called to memory the God VITHOBA, of Pandurang, who appeared to him in a vision. Then, after throwing into the river the account-books which showed who owed him money, he committed his business to his younger brother, and left the world and all the attachment to it to spend the remainder of his life in the service of Vithoba.⁽³⁾

Frustration was the main accumulative factor of his conversion. The death of his parents, his favourite wife, his eldest brother's wife and the failure of his business all led to his frustration. He

(3) A.C.Underwood, Conversion: Christian and Non-Christian, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1925), p.55.

could not continue to maintain the existing province of meaning because his frustration was the main cause of the break down of its reality. He was really frustrated with the existing world which had become meaningless. It had broken down when everything had gone away from him. What should he do now? He had to look for another meaning in life so that he could transfer and forget everything about his past experience.

Probably, he was not very strong enough to face the state of frustration. He really wanted to leave that world because it did not contribute any meaning to him. Suddenly, religion came to him offering a way of leaving the existing way of life. Therefore, he accepted religion and its reality to replace the existing way of life.

But the question we should consider is, why did he choose religion to be his new alternative? He could for example, try to improve his business to cover the loss during the bankruptcy. He could marry another girl to substitute for his dead wife. He could join other social activities

in order to release the tension of frustration. Unfortunately, these possibilities were not attractive to him. He did not want to reconstruct the same form of reality that had been broken down previously. The attraction of the religious province of meaning was stronger than any other alternatives that came to him. The religious reality might have given him hope as well as satisfactory answers to his existing problems. Therefore, he suddenly left the existing social world and transferred to the province of religion. The transition is, therefore, a form of a conversion experience.

Another remarkable conversion, belonging to the period of conflict between Hinduism and Christianity, may be noted, that of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Born in 1834, in a poor but orthodox Brahman family, he early showed a religious bent of mind. In his early twenties, he was appointed an assistant priest in a temple dedicated to the goddess Kali. He became a passionate devotee and frequently fell into a state of Samadhi, and would remain unconscious for hours. This caused him to neglect his duties, and he was therefore deprived of his position in the temple. He

then spent twelve years in a wood near by in a ceaseless endeavour to obtain union with the divine by means of the "Jnanamarga" and "Yoga" praxis. Peace and unification did not come to his divided soul till 1871, when he adopted the way of "Bhakti" and became a devotee of Krishna.⁽⁴⁾

His conversion is different from the previous example in the sense that his background was already religious before his conversion. But, why did he transfer to the way of Bhakti and became a passionate devotee of Krishna ? Possibly the way of Bhakti provided him with new hope of becoming a religious man. Then, afterwards, he started a new way of life which was aimed at obtaining union with divine. The break down of his world began to emerge when he was deprived of his position.

He was certainly very depressed and upset when such a punishment was imposed on him. It seemed that his own identity as a priest had gone away from him. It was really difficult for him to recover a new

(4) Ibid., p.66.

identity to replace the lost one. He therefore experienced a crisis whether to continue to live in that way or to look for another way of life. There were several other possibilities for him. He might choose to live as an ordinary man without considering religion in his life or, he might fight back against religious people who had deprived him of his position. But all these possibilities were not compatible to his previous religious orientation. Suddenly, he found a new alternative in the way of Bhakti. He found it more attractive and suitable for him than any other possible alternatives. Then the attractiveness of the way of Bhakti made him decided to become a devotee of Krishna. It provided him with a new identity in his life. Therefore, we could say that his transition was from one religious life to another form of religious life. There was, however, a transition from one province of reality to another, and it should therefore be considered as a conversion.

(b) Conversion in Buddhism.

Our next task is to investigate some of the examples of conversion in Buddhism. We should

begin our investigation by looking at the early history of Buddhism itself, since the life story of Gautama Buddha provides one of the conversion experiences of Buddhism.

Gautama Buddha was born in north central India of the clan of the Shakyas. His personal name was "Siddharta" (or Siddhattha) but was commonly known as "Gautama" (or Gotama).

It is said that his father was a King of the Shakyas and he was brought up in a life of luxury, and married a princess, Yashodra of surpassing beauty. His father had been warned by seers that the child (Gautama Buddha) would renounce the world when he saw certain signs, and so he was confined to the palace and its gardens. However, in due course, Gautama went outside the garden and the gods made the signs appear to him. The signs were four: an old man, a diseased man, a corpse and an ascetic. These revealed to him the sorrow of the world, the shortness of life and renunciation from the world. After that moment, he became restless and was unhappy with life in his father's palace. He was twenty-nine years of age, and resolved upon the

Great Renunciation. Then, one night, he left his sleeping wife and child behind and went out in a simple robe to live the life of an ascetic.

Later, he found that the life of an ascetic gave him no peace and he attempted extreme mortification and fasting, till his ribs stuck out like rafters of an old hut, his skin clung to his skull, and the skin of his stomach touched his spine. But, after a while he decided that there was no peace to be gained by self-torture and so he took food. The ascetics left him in disgust.

In his search for peace, he then went to a famous Hindu sanctuary at Gaya. He went a few miles beyond the town and sat down under a tree called Bo-Tree or Bodhi-Tree, the "tree of enlightenment". Here, Gautama resolved not to move till he had attained supreme enlightenment and understanding. After a day and night spent in meditation, light came to him. He saw into the heart of all things, the origin of suffering and the way to its destruction, his own previous birth and their ending, all the past, present and future. So, he became a "Buddha", an enlightened one, and

attained Nirvana, the "blowing out" of desire and the cessation of reincarnation.

The feeling of dissatisfaction about the existing social world in the luxurious life in his father's palace led him to search for another province of reality and a new identity. The story of his life indicates that the contrast between the luxurious life in the palace and the real life of ordinary people outside the palace had already brought a crisis in his mind when the four signs appeared to him. The signs taught him how his present life would be ending very soon and they also taught how people were suffering from starvation, disease and poverty.

These signs made him realize that the existing world-view in the palace was no longer compatible with the world-view of bigger social world outside the palace. He began to realize the inconsistency of two different world-views that confronted him. Finally, he came to the conclusion that he could no longer continue to maintain the hypocrisy^s of life in his father's palace because for him, it was not the real life.

In order to release himself from the conflict between the two different world-views, he left the existing social world and its world-view (left the palace) and then went outside the palace gardens. He then found that the life outside the palace was wider and more real. He could see how other people struggled among themselves for the survival of life. He also realized that death would come at the end of his own life and every one was going to experience the same death. Therefore, he felt necessary to leave immediately the existing social world and try to look for a satisfactory one.

The story tells us that he had tried various alternatives (such as the life in the palace, as an ascetic, an extreme mortification and fasting) through which he could obtain satisfaction. But none of these alternatives gave him satisfaction until he became a Buddha. Only here, he found the real world which provided him with new meaning, identity and reality in his life.

If we refer back to his early life in his father's palace, it seemed almost impossible for

him to become a truly religious man. He had been socialized into a life of luxury where religion was not taken into consideration. His transition to the new life as a Buddha should be caused by various psychological reasons.

It is possible that his transition to the new alternative was caused by dissatisfaction of life in the palace. When he discovered a wider world outside the palace which was the real one, he found that the meaning, values and purpose of life in the palace were only confined to his family world. They did not reflect the real life outside the palace which was wider and more real. This experience led him to dissatisfaction.

Another psychological reason was the problem of death (indicated by corpse). This problem which was not answered by his previous meaning of life in the palace led him to become interested in Buddhism. He began to realize that religion, in this case Buddhism provided answers to the question of death. Therefore; religion became more attractive to him than other alternatives.

Another example of conversion experience in Buddhism can be found among his early followers, for example the conversion experience of Subhada the last disciple made by the Buddha before his death. He was a mendicant who dwelt in the little town of Kusinara. He said,

" Then thought the mendicant, Subhada: this have I heard from fellow-mendicants of mine, old and well-stricken in years, teachers and disciples, when they said: 'Sometimes and full seldom do Tathagatas appear in the world, the Arahats Buddhas.' Yet this day, in the last watch of the night, the final passing away of the Samana Gotama will take place. Now a certain feeling of uncertainty has sprung up in my mind; and this faith have I in the Samana Gotama, that he, me thinks, is able to present the truth that I may get rid of this feeling of uncertainty." (5)

It is said that he went to the grove where the Buddha was lying and he asked to see Gotama. After his request been refused, he finally was allowed by Buddha himself to come near him. He told everything about his past doubts and fears to Gotama. Then, he was told to follow the Eightfold Noble Path which could lead him to the truth and peace.

(5) Ibid., p.72.

Although he tried to maintain his existing world-view by continuing his living as a mendicant, he had unconsciously accepted the teaching of Buddhism before the actual conversion took place. The story tells us that he had already heard about the teaching of Buddhism. Unfortunately, he was not yet interested in Buddhism because he could not find any attraction in Buddhism at that time. Because of his loyalty and love to his existing identity of his social world, he rejected Buddhism. If he accepted it, he might have lost his existing life style. Therefore, he struggled to maintain the existing identity in which he was quite familiar with it.

His resistance, however, could not last very long: Buddhism was more attractive. It undermined his existing world-view producing a conflict in his mind. He became restless and unstable. Doubts and fears began to arise. He found that the existing world-view could not meet the challenge from Buddhism. His own world began to break down gradually. Would he continue to maintain the existing world-view which began to lose its identity? Would he rely upon the existing world-view in spite of emigrating to the

new one ? These questions probably made him more restless and unhappy. Until finally, he decided to meet Gautama personally so that he could say his confession and could be blessed by him. His acceptance of Buddhism therefore, was a transition from one world-view to another. He left his own way of life (as a mendicant) and entered the new world of Buddhism. He began to realize that Buddhism was able to provide him a new identity and better world-view. He finally met the truth, joys and peace in the new world of Buddhism. Buddhism was therefore seen as attractive and satisfactory to him. His transition from one world-view to another can be considered as one of the conversion experiences in Buddhism.

(c) Conversion in Islam.

The study of conversion experience in Islam should begin with the early history of the religious experience of Muhammad.⁽⁶⁾ He was born in Mecca in

(6) According to Islam, Muhāmmād was a Prophet and is believed to be the last prophet of God. Unlike Gautama Buddha, he was not the founder, because the religion of Islam is believed to be revealed by God.

the year 571 A.D. to a famous family, the most respectable of Quraysh. Arab society before Muhammad and up to his time was very cruel and notorious for its aggressiveness. There was always a war between one clan and another, one clan frequently endangering another clan. The clash and bloodshed was almost everywhere during that period. Idols were their main objects of worship. It is reported that there were thousands of idols in Mecca alone.

This was the situation into which Muhammad was born. He was brought up within the notorious Arab social world, but unlike other Arabs, it is reported that Muhammad was against all these things. He grew up as an honest man, very noble and gentle. Because of his honesty, he was known as "al-amin", which means an honest man. He was also against idolatry. He was not very pleased with the situation in his existing society. In other words, his understanding of reality and identity in life was not compatible with the existing values and meaning of life of his own society. This was probably the beginning of the conflict in his mind. The conflict was between the two different

values, that is, between cruelty and gentleness. For many years he tried to be patient with the behaviour of other members of his society. But his own personality was not really compatible with the existing situation. He seemed to lose his Arab identity because his behaviour was not in consistence to his social groups during his early life. He viewed the existing world differently from others. Then the conflict in his mind became more serious. Nevertheless, he tried to keep the conflict quiet for some time. It seemed that his understanding of reality could have broken down at any time.

Until finally, at the age of forty years, it is reported that he first received his prophetic call from God. One night, he went to a cave called "Hiraa" and there the first revelation from God was revealed to him. The first revelation showed the beginning of his prophetic ministry call and his first mission to be the messenger of God. The first revelation which was revealed by God were a few verses from the "words of God". These verses can be found in Surāa (chapter) 96 of the Qur'ān;

" Proclaim ! (or read !) In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created - Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: Proclaim ! And thy Lord is most beautiful, - He who taught (the use of) the pen, - Taught man that which he knew not." (7)

This is the first revelation which came to Muhammad in the cave of Hiraa. It is the divine commission to preach and to proclaim God's message came to Muhammad. His duty of prophethood started with this first revelation. After that, there was an interval or break, extending over some months or perhaps over a year. Then, the remainder of this Suraa (verses 6 - 19) came soon after the interval of the revelation, and that portion is joined on to the first five verses containing the command of preach.

From that moment, he realized that he had been chosen by God to be the prophet. His wife, Khadijah gave him full support both material and spiritual. Later on, we have learnt that she became the first woman to believe in the prophethood

(7) Al - "Ūr'ān, Suraa 96, verses 1 - 5 (translation).

of Muhammad and the first woman to accept Islam as a new religion.

Being a prophet, Muhammad was very pleased and happy. His prophethood provided him with a new way of understanding of identity in life and he had got a new set of values and meaning in life. He was satisfied with the new world of Islam because it was compatible with his own personality and its way of understanding values and meaning in life. Islam provided him a way of leaving the existing world of notorious Arabs by introducing him to a new religion.

By referring to his experience, it has been found that there was a leap from one world-view to another (that is from the existing Arab social world to the Islamic social world). However, his transition was not a sudden one because his early personality and behaviour as well as his way of understanding reality and identity were quite similar to the new teaching of Islam in that aspect. He was in fact not very pleased with the way of understanding reality in his society. So, the revelation from God was the most possible accumulative factor of his transi-

tion from his existing social world to the Islamic social world. After his transition, he found the real way of understanding of reality in the new Islamic social world. Therefore, his transition from one worldview to another can be considered as one of the examples of conversion experience in Islam.

Probably, the most interesting example of conversion in Islam was the conversion experience of Omar or Umar (the second caliph). He was bitterly opposed to Muhammad before his conversion to Islam. It is reported that one day he set out with a sword in his hand to slay Muhammad. On the way, he was told that his sister, Fatimah and her husband Sa'id, had become Muslims. He then rushed into the house and found them being taught to recite the verses of the Holy Qur'ān. Surprisingly, on hearing the reading of the Qur'ān, he suddenly changed his mind. His anger changed into curiosity. Then, he asked them to take him to Muhammad as a convert. After his conversion, he was a dedicated Muslim and one of the best companions of the prophet Muhammad. When Muhammad died, he was chosen as the second caliph to succeed Abu Bakr. who became the first caliph.

It has been found that the conversion experience of Umar was quite similar to the conversion experience of St. Paul in Christianity in the sense that both were sudden examples of conversion. The fact that Umar had already known the idea of Islam and its teaching long before he converted into it. He already heard Muhammad preaching Islam everywhere in Mecca and Madīna. He knew that many members of his social group and even his family accepted Islam. Unlike others, he was still loyal to his old traditional Arab belief and custom. For him, a move to the new world of Islam would cause the loss of his traditional Arab identity in his life.

It was a difficult task for him to move from his traditional custom and belief which had been established by his tribe to the new world which was introduced by the prophet Muhammad. He thought that the truth of the new social world of Islam was not yet known but uncertain. Therefore, he continued to practise his traditional Arab belief and customs by rejecting the Islamic teaching and persecuting Muslims. Psychologically, he was in right position to stand against the new outcoming of the Islamic

society. He tried to resist the new challenge that came from Islam. In order to maintain or to sustain his traditional customs and beliefs, he bitterly opposed to Muhammad and rejected his teaching. His persecution and bitter opposition to Islam were aimed at sustaining his traditional beliefs and customs. This was the factor of his resistance.

The confrontation between the two types of ideas produced a conflict in his mind. He might be interested in Islam at that time, but his ego identity directed him to oppose Muhammad. By moving to the new religion, he might lose the traditional belief and this was also a loss of identity.

However, day by day the crisis in his mind became more serious. He found that he could not longer maintain his traditional world. The challenge from Islam became stronger and stronger. He saw many people of his tribe converted into Islam. Islam became more powerful and influential. And the most interesting point is that he unconsciously accepted the idea of Islam although he

continued to oppose Muhammad and other Muslims. That is why when he heard a few verses from the Qur'ān, he suddenly changed his attitude of complete anger to a positive attitude towards Islam. If the idea of Islam was not in his mind before the conversion took place, it was difficult for him to have a sudden change in attitude and belief.

Therefore, his sudden leap from the attitude of opposition to the attitude of acceptance of Islam indicated that he already had the idea of Islam in his mind long before the actual conversion took place. He found that Islam was a good alternative because it offered a wider meaning of life and a better way of understanding reality in life. So, his transition to the new religion of Islam was an example of religious conversion in Islam.

(d) Conversion in Christianity.

Before we examine the classical example of conversion in Christianity, let us first look at the concept of "twice born". It refers to the individual's

acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Saviour. A boy for example although he grows up within the social world of the Christian society, he does not necessarily become a Christian unless he is baptized or he believes in Jesus Christ. So, the baptism in Christianity and the belief in Jesus Christ are the marks of twice born. It implies that a person is born again (spiritually). This concept may help us to examine the example of conversion experience in Christianity.

A good example of conversion in Christianity is the experience of St. Paul described in Acts 9. It is reported that Saul or St. Paul at the beginning was in bitter opposition to Christians. The story of his conversion experience may be found in these verses;

" And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest. And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul Saul, why persecutest thou me ? And he said, Who art thou, Lord ? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ? And the Lord said unto him, arise,

and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias: and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth. And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priest to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and Kings, and the children of Israel. For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And When he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither, for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that

many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him. But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." (8)

His conversion experience is of great importance to the psychological study of religious conversion. Did he realize that the idea of Christianity had already been in his mind long before his conversion? How did he react against the idea of Christians which came to him before his conversion? Did he completely forget the former world of Jews society even after his conversion? These are some of the problems that we should deal with in our attempt to explain the psychological process of his conversion.

It is reported that Saul (or Paul) was very loyal to his Jewish society. He was bitterly in opposition to Christians and very active in perse-

(8) ACTS, 9: 1 - 27.

cuting them. His attitude seemed to protect the existing society of the Jews. His reaction against the Christians indicated that he did not want to see any break down in the stability of society of the Jews. He wanted to sustain the stability of the Jewish society as long as he could. He considered his Jewish society as a reality and therefore it should be maintained. This led him to resistance.

As a matter of fact, the idea of Christianity had already been in his mind before the actual conversion took place. His loyalty to Judaism led him to reject Christianity and persecute all Christians. We can find that his reaction towards Christianity was aimed at sustaining his identity as a Jew. Besides that, he unconsciously accepted the idea of Christianity. Then he came to experience the contrast between his existing religion and Christianity. Gradually, the two contrasting ideas between Judaism and Christianity brought about a crisis in his mind. At the beginning he tried to maintain that reality by imposing stronger opposition and more serious persecutions of the Christians. Psychologically, he had to channel the crisis by intensifying his persecutions.

Paul's resistance could not last very long because the new set of meanings which was introduced by Christianity seemed to be more interesting and satisfactory. On the other hand, the Jewish society could not provide him with satisfactory solutions for his problems. He also found that the world of the Jews was not able to solve his crisis. These were some of the possible factors which led him to leap from Judaism to Christianity. He might think that the world of the Jews was already broken down and its reality had been challenged. Therefore it was wise for him to look for another alternative which was more real.

The question is, why did he choose Christianity to be his new alternative? One main reason for this was the inadequacy of Judaism to provide answers to problems which were raised by Christianity. We have seen that Christianity raised more and more questions and many of these questions could not be solved by Judaism. This of course, led to the inadequacy of Judaism. He began to realize that Judaism was not able to fulfill his wishes to obtain the real way of understanding reality. On the other hand, the attraction of Christianity for him was that it was able

to provide answers to his problems. Therefore, we could say that unsettled problems in Judaism brought him to Christianity. These were the real accumulative factor of his transition from Judaism to Christianity in order to obtain a new understanding of identity and reality.

Besides that, Christianity was the only alternative that came to him and offered him a way of leaving Judaism. Christianity in this sense, was only the real challenge to the stability of Judaism and it produced problems attacking the stability of Judaism. The attraction of Christianity led him to leave Judaism and transfer to Christianity.

It is interesting to note that although he moved from the Jewish social world and entered the Christian social world, he could not forget completely his previous understanding of reality and identity at once. It seemed that, he entered the new world of Christianity and at the same time tried to reshape Christianity to what he was converted to in order to fulfill the inadequacies of Judaism. When he entered the world of Christianity, he brought together some of

the ideas from Judaism which were fulfilled in Christianity. Therefore, we can say that Paul reshaped the Christianity into which he was converted. This is an interesting point to our study because Christianity is seen in this context as a product of the inadequacy of Judaism.

Another interesting point in his conversion experience is the change of name from "Saul" to "Paul". The change contributes a significant aspect to our study. He might believe that by emigrating to the new world of Christianity he would obtain a new way of understanding identity. Since his identity as a Jew has broken down when he converted to Christianity, he felt it necessary to have a new name, Paul so that he could get a new identity in life.

Therefore, Paul's transition from Judaism to Christianity is a good example of conversion experience in Christianity. His conversion has given a new shape to Christianity because it is possible that some of the ideas from Judaism were brought together when he transferred to Christianity.

These are the examples of conversion in the four great religions of the world. We are unable to collect examples from all great religions. Although Judaism is one of the world's great religions, we are unable to give examples of its conversion experience for two reasons. Firstly, Judaism is an ethno-centric religion that is, the only religion for the Jews. Judaism as a religion is always associated with the Jewish people, the chosen people of God according to their theology. No one can convert to Judaism unless he becomes a Jew. And, this is hardly likely to occur because the term "Jew" itself refers to the people of Israel. In addition to that, Geoffrey Parrinder says,

" The word Jew means a member of the tribe of Judah, the royal tribe of David centred round Jerusalem, which was the only one left after the other tribes had been deported by the Assyrians in 722 B.C." (9)

And in another section of the same book he says,

" Hebrew religion thus became historical, and not merely a nature of worship but bound up with their race." (10)

Secondly, the meaning of conversion in the Old Testament is not similar to the existing meaning

(9) Geoffrey Parrinder, The World's Living Religion, first published 1964, (London: Pan Books Ltd., reprinted 1977), p.148.

(10) Ibid., p.149.

of conversion. In the Old Testament, the word "conversion" is only restricted to the return to God. James Strachan says that conversion in the Old Testament is,

" always equivalent to repentance and faith." (11)

We may take for example a call to repentance in the Old Testament,

" Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent and return yourselves from all your transgression; so iniquity shall not be your ruins." (12)

This verse reminds us that the people of Israel were frequently asked to repent and return to God. Repentance and faith thus, are central to the religion of Israel, that the people of Israel would all return to have faith in God, Yahweh. Therefore, conversion in early Judaism meant "return". It calls upon the people of Israel to repent and return to God. Besides that, the religion of Israel concerns only the divine relationship between the people of Israel and God. There is no actual conversion experience can be found in the Old Testament if its meaning is only restricted to the above understanding.

(11) James Strachan, "Conversion," ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS, edited by James Hastings, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1911), Vol.4, .p. 106.

(12) EZEKIEL, 18: 30.

For this reason, we are unable to give the similar treatment to its conversion experience. This does not mean that our model of studying conversion is inadequate, but the nature of Judaism itself makes it impossible to be converted into its religion unless one becomes a Jew.

In this chapter however, we have dealt with some classical examples of conversion in world's great religions. These examples are said to be purely religious conversion. We have tried to analyse these examples based on the model of transition which has been constructed in Part One. It is hoped that this kind of treatment will provide another approach of understanding conversion. And in the next chapter we shall try to deal with the existing definitions of conversion and show their inadequacies.

Chapter Nine

A CRITIQUE OF EXISTING DEFINITIONS OF CONVERSION

Conversion in its broad sense has long been a subject of psychological interest. Psychologists have become interested in the motivation and mechanics of change in conversion processes. William James was probably one of the first figures who tried to explore the process of conversion in individuals from a psychological point of view.

Generally, conversion is a generic term for change and implies a drastic alteration from a former state. In the physical science for instance, the term "conversion" is used to indicate an extreme change such as converting water into steam by heat. But religious conversion does not simply mean a "change", but is more than a change. We have talked about it in the previous chapters where the term conversion has been defined especially for the purpose of this study.

However, it is well to look at various definitions of this word suggested by different writers of different professional backgrounds.

William James began his Gifford lectures on conversion at Edinburgh (1901) by first defining the word conversion itself. He said,

" To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities." (1)

He has given a basis for understanding religious conversion in his attempt to show the possibility of studying religion psychologically. Although James's definition of conversion is a significant contribution to the understanding of religious conversion, it seems that there are inadequacies in some places.

His definition of conversion is seen to be restricted to the process of regeneration or perhaps rebirth rather than a transference to another province of meaning. It is something like a renewal process of

(1) William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, first published 1902, (Fountain Books, reprinted January 1977), p.194.

the former attitude of individuals into a better state of conduct. It is said to be only a change of consciousness from inferior to superior, unhappy to happiness and wrong to righteousness. Religion is merely a mediator for this renewal process because he says that religion which was previously peripheral in his consciousness now take a central place to generate the renewal process of the individual's consciousness.

Although James's definition is not very comprehensive, it is more satisfactory than other definitions. Probably, we could add something else to his definition so that it will be covering the whole area of conversion. The most important point to be mentioned when dealing with conversion is the "transition" or the "leap" from one province of meaning to another. When we speak about transition or a leap, it indicates more than a change of consciousness because individuals have to transfer from one province of meaning to another. Sometimes, they have to move from one social world to another, which is referred to as the physical transition (the difference between physical and social transition has been discussed in the previous chapters). In dealing with the transition process, we ought not to con-

fine our understanding to the change in consciousness only because the transition of individuals' world-view is more important. Individuals may view the reality of the world differently after being converted.

Therefore, conversion is not only a change in consciousness of wrong and great unhappiness to right and happiness, but it is an individual's leap from one world-view to another. It involves everything in the individual transition rather than restricted to a particular aspect of the individual's feeling or attitude.

In theological term, the word "conversion" has been widely used in a special sense to imply a marked alteration of one's spiritual state through a superior power, generally meaning a godhead.⁽²⁾

The process implies changes in the spiritual and mystical aspects of individuals. However, it could be possible to examine the process and motivation of such change although it generally involves the spiritual

(2) Leon Salzman, "Types of Religious Conversion," PASTORAL PSYCHOLOGY, Vol.17, No.166, (September 1966), p.10.

aspects of individuals. In order to comprehend adequately the quality of conversion, one must not only examine the professed beliefs, but must also study the motives, behaviour and implied effects of the change as well.

By confining attention to the alteration of one's spiritual state, the limit of conversion has become narrow. The fact that conversion does not only involve a spiritual change of individuals, but also includes a change in individuals' world-view. The alteration of one's spiritual state contributes only a part of the conversion process. The spiritual contribution to the conversion process can only facilitate the state of transition from one social world to another. Other factors which can accumulate the break down of the old province of meaning are more essential. The process of conversion will not be completed by the alteration of one's spiritual state alone unless it is followed by the complete individual transition from the former state. Therefore, this definition is not considered as a comprehensive one since it is lack of complete individual preparation to leap to another world-view.

Another definition came from E.D.Starbuck. He suggested that,

" Conversion is characterised by more or less sudden changes of character from evil to goodness, from sinfulness to righteousness, and from indifference to spiritual insight and activity." (3)

Why should he say that conversion is turning away from sin ? The reason might be that there are many people who change to a religious life simply because they know that they are sinful. They previously acted against religious orders and gave no room in their life to the religious dimension. The sense of sinfulness led them to realize that religion does play an essential part in human life. Through their long experience they begin to realize that one day they should turn to the religious life in order to gain perfection and satisfaction which are probably found in religious life. For some people, peace and joys are probably found in the religious life although for some others they may obtain them from other aspects of life.

Once again the definition is not conclusive. It does not include the actual transition of individuals from the former life to the new religious life. Starbuck, in

(3) Edwin Diller Starbuck, The Psychology of Religion, (London: Walter Scott, 1899), p.21.

his definition merely stresses on the sudden changes from sinfulness to righteousness. The actual process of transition is not mentioned in his definition. Perhaps, he should say something about the individual's attitude towards the world-view before and after the conversion has taken place.

Besides that, his definition does not include the individual's transition from non-religious life (secular) to the religious life. As a matter of fact, it is also one of the most significant types of conversion especially in the present industrial society.

Another aspect of conversion which is not mentioned here is the transition of individuals from the religious to the secular, which is called de-conversion. Therefore, his definition is not inclusive enough to give a meaning of conversion.

Hill (1955)⁽⁴⁾ suggests another definition of conversion in his article: "The Psychology of Conversion". He says,

(4) Hill William S., "The Psychology of Conversion," PASTORAL PSYCHOLOGY, Vol.6, No.58, (1955), pp.43-46.

" Conversion should be defined as a change in one's way of life." (5)

His definition seems to be very general since it is not confined to any one aspect of life. However, in dealing with the conversion, he is more interested in sudden or dramatic conversion than in gradual ones.

As far as conversion is concerned, we have said that it should include the actual transition of individuals from one world to another. It is more than a change in one's way of life. Individuals may simply change their way of life but the change is not actually a complete meaning of conversion. To be converted means people should leave the existing world-view and enter the new one through a leap. They should also abide by the new rules of the new social world. The transition process should be normally caused by a certain break down in the existing one and the existence of an attractive alternative. If someone previously lived in a wooden house and now moves to a flat, it is not yet a

(5) Joel Allison, " Recent Empirical Studies of Religious Conversion Experience," PASTORAL PSYCHOLOGY, Vol.17, No.166, (September, 1966), p.21.

conversion. The change in his way of life from living in a wooden house to a flat does not necessarily involve his world-view. He may have the same province of meaning, he may view the world as he did before and he may continue to maintain the existing world-view and reshape it with the new social world. Consequently, it is unfair to conclude that conversion is a change in one's way of life.

There are a few writers who say that there is a similarity between conversion experience and brainwashing. Windermiller (1960) attempts to draw the similarity between them. He then concludes that both involve; i) crisis experiences and problem solving processes which aid in "maintaining ego identity and homeostasis; ii) involve emotional upheaval issuing in changed life and thinking; iii) rely on group pressures involving interrogation, confession, and discussion; iv) make use of highly structured organizations; v) introduce new vocabularies; vi) involve exhaustion, surrender and suggestion; vii) give rise to self-criticism, doubt, fear, and guilt; viii) bring feelings of cleanness, lightness, relief, gratitude, new truth, dedication and zeal and ix) involve repression or suppression of one

psychic system and the coming into conscious control of another." (6)

His treatment of both conversion and brainwashing however, tends to indicate that there is a change in attitude in both of them. It is said to be similar in the sense that both conversion and brainwashing may produce a change in attitude of individuals involved. But there are still dissimilarities between the two because they are different in content, purpose, goals, motivation and different in world-views.

Therefore, we cannot rely entirely on the single similarity between the two in order to limit our understanding of conversion. It is sufficient to say that a few differences or dissimilarities which have been mentioned above would result in the conclusion that conversion is not simply a change. This treatment however, would only help people to understand the early stage of the actual conversion before the transition takes place. As having said earlier, it is not a real meaning of conversion unless it is followed by the transition.

(6) Ibid., p.30

The same treatment is also found in Frank's work (1961). He suggests that there is a relationship between conversion and brainwashing in a certain point. He says,

" the process of psychotherapy and faith healing are similar to those of conversion and brainwashing in that all involve emotional, cognitive, and behavioural components." (7)

Probably, Frank does not intend to outline the definition of conversion in his study. However, he has pointed out the possibility of the relationship between conversion and brainwashing. We have no ground to deny the existence of this relationship because it has been found to be similar up to some degree (both can produce a change in attitude). But, this agreement, as mentioned earlier, does not indicate the actual meaning of the conversion process.

It seems necessary to distinguish between conversion and brainwashing so that any confusion may be avoided. Although they are similar in the sense that both are accompanied by a change in attitude, the two are different in contents, purposes, and motivation. In conversion, the transition of individuals

(7) Ibid., p.30.

from one state of reality to another is motivated by the individual's own consciousness. Although there are several factors from outside the individual's own consciousness which accumulate the transition, his own consciousness and his ability to leap as well as his voluntary attitude to leap are more important. Therefore, the transition of individuals in conversion is more voluntary than in brainwashing.

On the other hand, brainwashing is an extreme form of socialization. It is a violent expulsion from one world to another. Individuals are forced to leave the existing social world and enter into the suggested social world. It is normally motivated by a strong force from outside individuals' own consciousness. Sometimes, they are even tortured and violently forced to move to another social world. So, the transition of individuals to the new social world in brainwashing is not through the attraction of the new world but through its destruction of the existing one. In this case, individuals have no other alternatives except moving into the suggested province of reality because their existing social world has been destroyed. We have, thus, seen that

brainwashing is more violent than the transition in conversion. It is not caused by the conflict or crisis in their mind, but it is a matter of a violent expulsion from the existing social world to another. It is not through the attraction of the new social world, but through the destruction of the existing one. Therefore, we must avoid any form of confusion between conversion and brainwashing because the differences are very obvious indeed.

On the light of the above discussion, it is felt that Frank's treatment of conversion is not considered as a definition, instead, it is a method of how he tries to approach both conversion and brainwashing. And probably, he tries to point out the similarity or the agreement brought about by the two processes.

Brock (1962) studies the conversion from one religion to another by employing laboratory-like techniques. He then hypothesizes,

" the more one felt forced by external pressure to change to a discrepant point of view (or religion) the less the degree of change that would ensue. More change in attitude would result if one felt more freedom of choice in changing one's behaviour." (8)

(8) Ibid., p.31.

Once again we find that Brock's finding is not a real definition of conversion. His findings however, indicate only a prominent difference between change under coercion and change that is more voluntary. His study also tries to illustrate the possibility of advancing our knowledge of conversion by means of laboratory, experimental manipulations as well as by field studies and more naturalistic and direct behavioural observations. So, it is found that his study is not intended to define the word conversion.

Some writers do not provide an adequate definition of conversion. Edward Scribner Ames (1910) for example suggests that,

" conversion designates the more sudden, intense and extreme emotional experience." (9)

He adds that it is the result of immediate, direct control and suggestion on the part of evangelists, parents and teachers. It is common among certain evangelical protestant denominations. It occurs chiefly in those communions which have cultivated an elaborate technique to produce it.

(9) Edward Scribner Ames, The Psychology of Religious Experience, (London: Constable & Co.Ltd., 1910), p.257.

This explanation of the conversion process seems to be restricted because he considered only sudden and dramatic conversions. He tries to distinguish the various religious groups and finds that the liturgical cults and the more intellectual churches tend to emphasize on gradual growth through education and ceremonies of confirmation.

We, thus, find that his definition is inadequate because he restricted the process to the more sudden, intense and extreme emotional experience. The fact that conversion always occurs in the normal process of socialization. The sudden, intense and extreme emotional experience of individuals are only parts of the whole conversion phenomena. He might have missed other aspects of more important conversion phenomena, that is a fully socialized society or individuals. This is the most interesting area of studying conversion experience because we are curious to know why sometimes conversion takes place among the fully socialized individuals. If we rely on his definition, our understanding of conversion might be confined to only the abnormal phenomena of individuals' experience. If the study is limited to

such ways, it will not be very interesting because such an extreme emotional experience has always led to a break down of a world-view.

Besides the limitation of conversion to the extreme emotional experience, which is abnormal, he does not clarify the actual meaning of conversion. What involve in individuals when the emotional experience has come to the climax. How do people react against it ? What are the real factors which lead to the emotional experience ? How do people move from one world-view to another ? Probably, these are the problems which should be included in his definition. Unfortunately he does not mention any transition from one province of meaning to another as he should do. Therefore, his definition is said to be inadequate and inconclusive.

According to De Sanctis, in religious psychology, conversion implies,

" mutation, not of cult, but rather of conscience, regarding the sentiment and practice of a religion." (10)

This is also not considered as a definition of conver-

(10) Sante De Sanctis, Religious Conversion: A Bio-Psychological Study, translated by Helen Augur, (London: Kegan Paul, 1927), p.29.

sion because it emphasizes only on the part of mutation of conscience. The mutation is, of course, a part of the conversion processes, but it also involves other processes such as a break down in the existing province of meaning, the transition, the existence of a new alternative and the attitudes towards the transition. These are believed to be the actual processes of a conversion experience.

Besides that, his treatment of conversion seems to be one sided in the sense that he only emphasizes the mutation of religious consciousness. His treatment tends to explain the existing religious consciousness and its mutation to a higher degree of religious consciousness. To put it differently, he tends to explain the conversion phenomena within the religious consciousness of individuals. Perhaps, he should also pay attention to the individual's transition from the religious to the secular social world and from the secular to the religious. Therefore, his treatment of conversion is not considered as a good definition of the actual meaning of conversion.

Another definition of religious conversion is given by Thouless. He suggests that,

" Religious conversion is the name commonly given to the process which leads to the adoption of a religious attitude." (11)

It includes a change in religious belief and will be accompanied by changes in motivation to behaviour and in reaction to the social environment.

His definition seems to try to limit the conversion to processes in which there is an outbreak into consciousness of something, such as a system of belief, which seems to have had no period of development in the mind. He supports his definition by giving the sudden conversion of St. Paul described in ACTS 9. The example says that Saul was an orthodox Jew and was very active in persecution of the Christians. He went from Jerusalem towards Damascus with authority from the high priest to arrest the Christians there. But later, on the way, he was converted to Christianity and subsequently started preaching in the synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God.

(11) Robert H. Thouless, An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion, first published 1971, 3rd. edition, (London: Cambridge Universitu Press, reprinted 1974), p.104.

As far as St. Paul is concerned, William James was justified in choosing St. Paul's experience as a good example of a sudden conversion to Christianity. But, his definition of conversion is inadequate and inconclusive. He stresses more the process which leads to the adoption of a religious attitude. To be converted means, to be transferred from one province of meaning to another province of meaning. The process itself is not really yet a conversion but it should be accompanied by a transition to a new world-view. The adoption of a religious attitude or the rejection, takes place after an individual has left the existing province of meaning and entered into the new province of meaning. St. Paul's conversion experience has shown that there is a transition from one world-view (of the Jew) to another (of Christianity). Thus, the experience in between these two provinces of meaning is not yet called a conversion in its real meaning (it is well to refer to the model of transition which has been constructed in the previous chapters).

The same inadequacy can be found in Thouless's definition since the possibility of conversion from the religious to the non-religious is not included in his treatment of conversion. There is no indication of how

he tries to explain the possibility of individuals' conversion to the non-religious world (secular). He only stresses the process which leads to the adoption of a religious attitude. Perhaps it is well to include the rejection of a religious belief and attitude by transferring to the non-religious world. Therefore, it is unfair to accept his definition completely unless the process of de-conversion is also taken for granted and it should be treated as one of the possible types of conversion.

According to W.Lawson Jones the experience of conversion is only one of the species of religious experience. There are many other aspects of religious experience, which do not affect any reformation or change of the worshipper's life. He defines religious conversion as,

" a change of character and mode of life brought about through the agency of religious ideas and sentiments. It produces a sense of new relationships." (12)

It involves much more than the ordinary religious life of the conventional kind. Its consequences in character and conduct are more far-reaching than the influence

(12) W.Lawson Jones, A Psychological Study of Religious Conversion, (London: The Epworth Press, 1937), p.31.

of a conventional act of worship. This may be the reason why psychologists become interested in the psychological study of religious conversion.

Both theologians and psychologists say that a change of attitude and conduct is regarded as an essential part of the experience. In the light of this definition, religious conversion manifests itself in a redirection of the will, and the forming of the new pattern of behaviour. Unfortunately, Jones does not clarify clearly how is the change obtained. He has said something about the role of the agency of religious ideas in bringing about the change of character and mode of life. Perhaps, he should also include the nature of transition or leap in order to produce a change. Probably, there is no such a change without the existence of transition. It is difficult to assume that an individual will change his attitude and meaning in life if he remains in the same province of meaning. In other words, if people want to change their meaning in life, they have to transfer or to leap to the new province of meaning. If they still remain in the same province of meaning, they will not produce any change in his world-view.

He adds that religious experience can be described as a conversion only when it brings about some more or less enduring modification of character and conduct. It is true especially when the new province of meaning can introduce more attractive alternatives. As soon as the alternative is provided and it is attractive, the transition is likely to take place. Therefore, the enduring modification of character and conduct is very much dependent upon the attractiveness of the new province of meaning.

This definition, however, provides the meaning that one essential thing about conversion is the reorganization of the inward life of the convert, which reveals itself in a change of conduct. The theological study of conversion involves a wide range of changes in human behaviour. Sometimes, people converted from immorality, sometimes from confusion or apathy or meaninglessness. In order to understand the meaning of conversion properly, there should be a conclusive definition which involves all appropriate processes leading to the conversion.

Having found the inadequacies in the existing definitions of conversion, it is suggested that our approach in defining conversion in this study is much better than the existing one.

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